

**Impressum**

Klaus Bung:

Strip Tease, or Virtual Virtue: The Devil's Diary

Length: 26,546 words = 140,965 characters, approx 70 pp A4

e: klaus.bung@rochdalewriters.org.uk

© 2001 Klaus Bung

Date: 2001-00-00, Mk1.5

## SYNOPSIS

Length of story: 26,546 words

Length of synopsis: 670 words

The devil incarnates as Robert, our narrator, to test his skills of seduction and corruption. He picks an unpromising victim and a difficult environment. His victim is a Betschwester (German), a 'beata' (Portuguese and Spanish), no English term found yet (a woman who spends a hell of a lot of time in church) who is sure to reject his advances. He turns up at the coast of Normandy with his sister Salina, with whom he has, of course, an incestuous relationship. Nobody knows their true identity. They make a bet that they will continue swimming daily in the cold sea from November to April. The beata feels safe in the company of Salina and joins in the enterprise. After a few days Salina has to leave on a longer journey. Robert has managed to make the beata feel safe or to attract her erotic attention. Thenceforth Robert and the beata continue their daily swim, and it is no longer clear whether the beata persists because of the sport or because of the erotic potential offered by Robert.

Robert has 21 minutes a day to get at the beata, 7 minutes undressing in wind and rain, 7 minutes swimming in the icy sea, and 7 minutes dressing. Then she has to race back to her husband and he goes to have breakfast in hell to get warm again.

From now on Robert manages to muddy the waters and smutty the conversation and gradually to confuse all the moral categories: good and bad, divine, diabolical, the limits of what is compatible with, or permissible in, marriage. He destroys her idols, like the man on the cross, and elevates instead the true God, her own body. Day by day, a little of her past is revealed (Strip) or teased out of her (Tease). The beata is 60 and is married to a man 20 years her senior. The readers are left in doubt as to whether the beata is being seduced and corrupted, or whether she tries to seduce Robert whose identity she does not know, whether he uncovers her true beauty (physical and spiritual as she gradually loses her inhibitions and reveals more and more about her former life [the moral judgement depends on the preconceptions of the reader]), whether she appears better during those 21 minutes on the icy beach, or with the image she has in church, whether Robert is doing her a favour by allowing her to become herself [natural and randy] and offering her his body with which she can, for the last time in her life, act out some of her real fantasies without running any danger, since Robert, the cynic (the Don Alfonso of *Così fan tutte*; the Viscount de Valmont of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*; the Mephistopheles of *Faust*) sees no point in leading her to actual sexual intercourse (cunt teaser) but is quite happy with some groping and stripping and with either confusing her moral attitudes or with loosening them up [depending on the reader's point of view]; making her do things which would shock her husband and her parish priest. It is not clear whether the beata, having yielded to Robert, is 'better' or

---

'worse' than she was before he started working on her. This is intellectual seduction, and as a result, the beata's virtue (in a life devoted to the pleasures of the flesh) is exalted or her virtue in being a beata is exposed as being merely virtual. Their sexual relations are not real but virtual (the devil need not fuck; one can sin without fucking), &c. Salina returns to celebrate Christmas with Robert - no devil would fail to do that. The beata goes off on a Christmas holiday with her husband. She never returns. 18 months later, Robert receives a religious postcard in which she tells him that her husband has died, she has entered a convent, thanks him for the encounter, and prays for his salvation. The saint on the postcard is not Mary Magdalene but St Sebastian.

# Klaus Bung:

## Strip Tease, or Virtual Virtue

### -

## The Devil's Diary

#### THE BET

Usually mermaids come to tempt, but in this story it was I who tempted the mermaid ... but, would I have wanted to tempt the mermaid if the mermaid hadn't tempted me?

The person who is really responsible for the corruption of virtue about which I want to tell you is my sister Salina. She was once a saint, by accident rather than design (or even against design). Now she is a tough old nut who is trying to liberate herself from the prejudices and inhibitions of her youth. When she was 55, she chucked out her husband and set up home alone on the rocky coast of Normandy. She then made up for what she had missed as a result of her puritanical upbringing and during her boring marriage, determined to keep her body fit through rigorous exercise and healthy lifestyle: long solitary walks along the north coast of France, rucksack travels to Iceland, Egypt and Israel, and a one thousand km walk to the saints of Brittany, a must for any self-respecting devil, and, oh yes, there was this famous bet.

Salina wanted to become well embedded in the local community the better to wreak havoc there and had therefore applied to join the local lifeboat crew as a full member, the first woman ever to do so. The voting members were divided in their opinion. Was she tough enough? Would she screw? Half were in favour and half against, and for one year arguments to and fro were emphatically exchanged in the brasserie. One evening, in an advanced stage of inebriation, the opponents of the proposal suggested a test of toughness. If Salina were able to swim in the cold sea for seven minutes every day, from 1 November to 1 April, with the exception of a three-week holiday in December which everyone knew she could not cancel, she would be accepted. Her opponents agreed with the proposal, convinced that she would never pass the test. Salina set to work on 15 October to get used to staying in the water for seven minutes at a time. That's when I arrived on the scene and was inadvertently, but happily, drawn into her net of intrigue.

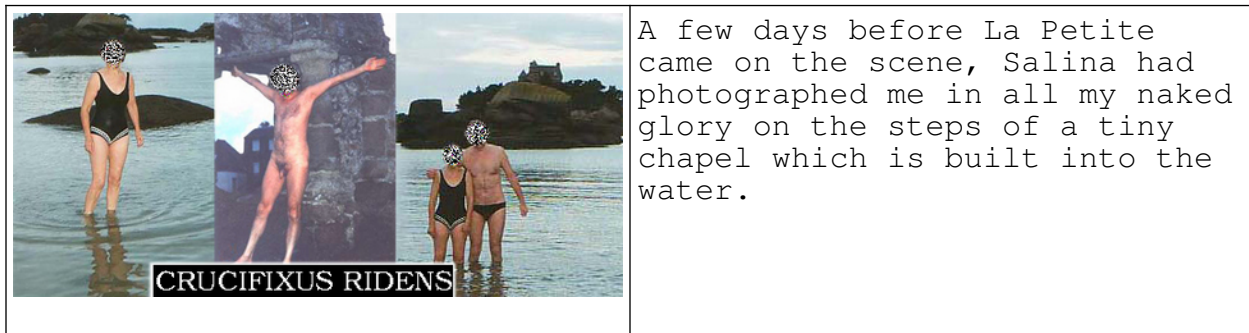
What nobody knows is that Salina and I are siblings from hell, passionately in love with each other, and that we are on a mission to test the righteous and the self-righteous and to reward the unrighteous.

A couple of years ago, Salina had bumped into a cheerful little black-haired woman on her walks along the coast. She also met her

while shopping in the nearby coastal town. She became wary when she noticed her unembarrassed enthusiasm for things divine and made a point of never enquiring about her name or her address, and the two women always comfortably addressed each other as 'Madame', but in absentia called her La Petite. Salina told La Petite about her bet.

'Oh Madame, how wonderful! May I join you? I have wanted to do this all my life but never had the courage to do it alone.'

There was no way for Salina to refuse.



A friend of Salina's, also an old woman, to whom she had spoken about the planned outrage, was hiding in the bushes with a long-focus camera to get her piece of the action. Salina has to share her brother with the local community of randy old-age pensioners. He doesn't mind being shared. It is only his body.

## TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER

On the first day La Petite joined us, she wore a swimsuit with a red-green pattern and entered the water no further than her knees. I kept aloof, bowed politely, addressed her as 'Madame', and let Salina do all the talking to the sociable bubbly little woman. On the beach I walked ahead of them or followed them, as if I were not in the slightest interested in all this women's business.

"I don't like her," says Salina afterwards, "she is an enthusiast and talks shamelessly about God. That's bad form. You must corrupt her. Nail her to the bed."

## WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER, TO THURSDAY, 23 NOVEMBER

On Wednesday and Thursday she enters the water up to her hips, I can see her black bikini bottom but no more, for she wears an anorak and a scarf.

**FRIDAY, 24 NOVEMBER**

She enters the sea up to her breast. She holds her hands horizontally above the water, for she is afraid of her hands getting cold. I begin showing an interest in her, calling her to drop her hands and submerge herself fully. That's what she does on Saturday.

**SATURDAY, 25 NOVEMBER**

Salina brings a camera and wants to photograph me (this time bikini-clad) coming out of the water. I insist that she take a shot of me together with La Petite as well, and put my arm around her waist, not encountering any resistance. This was my first move, in public, where she would feel safe, to give her some idea of what might be possible if she played her cards right.

I am testing how far one can go with somebody that pious and full of God ("enthusiast"), a loveless and passionless experiment in seduction.

**SUNDAY, 26 NOVEMBER**

On Sunday, even I rest from all my evil works -- if only to confound the Lord and all his theories.

**MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER**

Salina has left for three weeks. La Petite and I continue the daily ice bath on our own. She has now begun to trust me: I am no danger to her, I am just her friend's shy brother. She has also begun to see some potential, or hasn't she?

She has a husband who is twenty years her senior. I was bantering with her and heard her say that there is no point in upsetting people unnecessarily. I readily agreed, still not knowing what she meant. Automatic agreement is a good strategy since, ever so often, words don't mean what they seem to say, anyway. Therefore I just agree: it usually does more good than harm. I then learn that her husband doesn't know that instead of with Salina, she now goes swimming with Salina's brother. "Why upset him or make him suspicious or jealous? Brother or sister, it's virtually the same anyway," she says.

I should have thought that being with Salina's brother was considerably more dangerous than being with Salina, but why should I frighten her!

If I wasn't aware before that she was aware of me as a sexual entity, then from now on I was. Now I have a secret with her. She is aware of a danger that is such that her husband must not know about it.

To my mind there is no danger at all. We aren't going to run off with each other. We aren't going to make love to each other: it is too cold on the beach, it is too cold in the water, neither of us has a room which provides privacy, and she is expected back by her husband within 45 minutes -- and that includes the drive. There wouldn't even be enough time for a stand-up quickie in the public toilet. But from that day onward my banter gets more daring.

#### **TUESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER**

After dressing, she brushes her shoulder-long black hair (still black at her age?). She smiles as I call her Lore Ley, la charmeuse, the great temptress who destroyed so many pêcheurs (fishermen). I prefer being a pêcheur (sinner) and make love to Lore Ley. I tell her how hard I find it to resist temptation. I never say what the temptation could possibly be, but she seems to understand and takes it all very seriously, a sign that she, too, is tempted. I agree that we both must resist this terrible temptation. We must support each other. Joint resistance is an act of friendship. I am a true friend to her.

#### **WEDNESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER**

There is a calvaire standing at the end of the beach. She points at the man on the cross and says: "He is the only one I love now."

Salina has warned me about that trait of hers. She has known La Petite for at least a year, meeting her here and there on her solitary walks along the coast. La Petite likes to talk enthusiastically about God in nature, and other esoteric stuff, which to people as reticent as Salina, and most modern agnostics, smacks of obsession, madness or bigotry. Salina therefore, after all this time, has never asked her for her name and continues to call her 'Madame'. She does not want a madwoman to attach herself to her, visit her at home, and make a nuisance of herself.

I have to wean her away from that anti-carnal religion which has taken hold of her and show her that it is not incompatible with picking up a few morsels of corporal joy when they happen to be lying on the beach.

When she tells me for the second time about her love for Christ Crucified, I tell her that this is necrophilia, adding that I don't mind, for I love necrophilia. She replies that I am wicked, but cannot help laughing.

I tell her that it is all very well to love le bon Dieu, but le bon Dieu wants us to love everybody, that means especially men (if we are women) and women (if we are men), and even le bon

Diable (who has not only a cock but two horns to boot), and that is me.

"Non, Monsieur," she counters, "you are too kind, you are not the devil, I refuse to believe it."

"People never believe in the devil, when they meet him," I say, "and that's just as well. But tell me, Madame, are you perhaps une diablesse. Mois, j'aime les diablesses."

"Mais non, Monsieur, I have decided to love only our Lord and the beautiful world he has created."

"He has created me too, so I hope you will love me a little."

"Of course, we all must love one another."

"Oh Madame, you make me so happy!", and with these words we reach her car, part for the day, and I go to the bakers from hell to buy my baguette.

As from today I start fantasising about her. Nothing too stunning, for the limitations of this relationship are too obvious.

But men and women must incessantly practise the art of seduction. That, I maintain, is their moral duty. Young people do it naturally, and often little seduction is necessary. Older people lose the knack, have neither the confidence to seduce nor to accept seduction and become increasingly lonely. Their desires, however, are the same as those of the youngsters. They risk less. They cannot become pregnant. The greatest risk is rejection. Successful experiments must keep skill and confidence alive and demonstrate that the risk of rejection is not as great as one fears and is worth taking. Such thoughts drive me as I play my frivolous games with La Petite. I'm doing her and myself a good turn. Would she have reason to complain if she knew that I am only interested in her body, and not even that? In her younger days she would have rejected a person who merely desired her body. She would have wanted to be desired for her soul, for her mind. Now she gets just that. Her mind will be seduced.

This will be a virtual, a mental seduction and a mental surrender. There is value and joy in that too. The bodies will only be there to signal what is happening in the minds. I view her now as someone whom I already possess. Someone who desires me and whom I desire, and we both know it even though she dares not say it, someone who no longer resists, someone who would screw with me if given half a chance. The only thing that stops us, and will stop us, is the lack of opportunity. I view myself in the water with her, placing my hands on her buttocks and drawing her towards me and pressing her against me as tightly as I possibly can, while her hands do exactly the same to me. We press our genitals against each other and know there is no reason why we should not do so. We know we are strangers, that makes it



exciting. We have lost our shame, we have lost our social inhibitions, we both have made the greatest conquest possible.

As I fantasise, I imagine her having the same fantasy when she is alone. Perhaps her hand or her finger will make it more real. I know that if I approached her tomorrow and pulled her against me in the water, where nobody can see us, she would respond. I know, or rather I think I know. My certainty is part of my fantasy. In my mind and in her mind the surrender has already taken place. All that is necessary is to remove the social barriers to putting it into practice. She has already given herself to me, but I must allow her to save face, to pretend to be putting up a resistance (while I pretend that I accept her reasoning), to pretend to be in agreement with her saviour, to pretend to be pure, when what she would really like to be is a slut, a woman without shame and without inhibitions, but a woman with desire, exactly like mine, and honest about it, a woman who enjoys life and enjoys her own body.

Now she feels obliged to say: "I love my body because God has made my body and he has made it beautiful." This is her cache-sexe.

Were she ever to say (and I will not know her for long enough to see that happening): "I am a slut, I want to behave like a slut, I want to make love like a slut, and I like men who like and respect sluts, and I want a cock in my cunt, and I want to rub my tits against his", then her transformation would be complete, and her desire would be in harmony with her self-confidence. But as it is she has to continue pretending that she is a lady and that ladies do not really like such things, and I must jolly her along on that route. The only thing that is necessary to do now is to go through the motions, and they will be delightful.

#### **THURSDAY, 30 NOVEMBER**

##### **UNDRESSING**

At daybreak, as I walk to our bathing spot and pass another calvaire, I receive fresh inspiration from the Lord.

"Madame," I say, "have you ever noticed that the man on the cross is tied to a permanent erection? If you love the man, you must also love his erection."

This is not quite logical, I know, but I am aiming at her emotions rather than her intellect and must induce her to think of erections with love rather than fear. I must convert the man on the cross into a real man, into an object of real desire, into an object of lust. If I succeed, then perhaps she may become capable again of lusting after an ordinary man. God alone knows what disappointment or loss of self-confidence has driven her to conversion. I must give her something lusty to remember each time she looks at a crucifix.

"You know, Madame," I say, "who has put that crossbar on the crucifix? This is the work of the devil, it is like the horizontal bar or the oblique stroke on a traffic sign. It means 'No Entry', 'Do Not Do This', 'Erections Prohibited'."

She agrees with this but I continue: "We must tear the diabolical crossbar from the crucifix. Then the upright beam will become an erect rocket to launch us into paradise. Then it becomes a phallos which says: 'Erections will launch you into heaven, making love will get you into paradise'. That is my religion."

I think she has had enough subversive talk for the day. She accepts my blasphemies with surprising calm. Is she perhaps half in agreement with me?

She is wearing her black lycra swimsuit. She has two swimsuits which she changes every couple of days, a dull multicoloured one which does not attract attention, and the black one which shows off her figure to better advantage.

I swim vigorously, 200 strokes is my daily target. She is not a good swimmer, but a tough nut, and she stays in the water as long as I do. "Ça pique," she smiles from time to time when she feels the coldness of the water. She is proud of having overcome her fear of cold water.

We leave the sea together, wading for a while through the long stretch of shallow water. I inspect her body. Her age shows from her neck upward; the area below her neck is in excellent shape. She is slim, her body is muscular (no, she doesn't do any sport or exercises regularly, she says), her breasts have gone with age, perhaps they were always small, but her back, all exposed, and her buttocks look nice, and the shape of her belly and her crotch look appetising. As we wade, I lightly rest my hand on her buttock, just for a few steps, and there is no protest.

"Vous êtes si mince, Madame," I say, "how on earth did you manage to maintain your body so beautiful. You are difficult to resist. I pray to the Lord every day to save me from the temptation."

She asks me if I am married, (no, I am divorced -- from God), and if I don't have a girlfriend to whom I am attached.

I wriggle out of that question with a joke: "I am attached to many girlfriends. I am very faithful by nature. I never abandon an old one when a new one comes along. My headstone has already been prepared. It says: HE WAS FAITHFUL TO ALL WOMEN".

I do not know how to handle that question. It is not a matter of speaking the truth but of saying what is effective. If I have one girlfriend and am nevertheless prepared to dally with La Petite, I am giving her a good (or as Puritans would say, a bad) example. I am then in the same position as her, who is married, and I am telling her implicitly that this doesn't matter, that I will be

as guilty, or as innocent, as she, in the games we are trying to play. If I can do it, she can do it.

But if I confess to only one girlfriend, I make myself perhaps into too serious or ordinary a person. A discussion on monogamy, on faithfulness, might ensue, and I might have to justify my actions on the basis of some moral or immoral code, whereas I feel that I am following, should follow, and want her to follow, a sound instinct.

Yes, I think, I was right to pretend to be a rake. She will feel more honoured, more attractive, then and understand how I can be so cheeky.

Last night I read Colette. School inspector Dutertre tries to seduce fifteen-year-old Claudine and has kissed her. She has run away in disgust to wash her mouth, but later she reflects: "En voilà une aventure" (This is exciting!) and even later she says to herself: "Puisque celui-là, qui a connu des tas de femmes, à Paris et partout, me trouve plaisante, c'est donc que je ne suis pas très laide!" (Since this man, who has known lots of women, in Paris and everywhere, finds me pleasant, it follows that I cannot be too ugly.) ("Claudine à l'école", Pleiade, p 118)

This means that a successful womaniser (as opposed to a Don Giovanni) should always admit to being a womaniser, if he wants to remain one, but should pretend that he denies it.

"Life is short," I say to La Petite, "there aren't many opportunities, and we must take those which happen to come along: that is our moral duty, and that's what the good Lord says, didn't you know?"

"That is news to me," she replies and produces the one English phrase she remembers from school: "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose".

"My lusty soul produces holy witness", comes the antiphon. "We must be smart enough to see when a body is on offer, and courageous enough to take it."

"You are right," she says, "and my body is not on offer."

"But mine is, and I'm not nailed to the cross. I'll nail you if you want me to, and you are allowed to touch me, everywhere. You can't do that when you are in church."

"Ah, Monsieur, I have done many naughty things (assez de bêtises) when I was young, but later on I learnt that this doesn't make us truly happy."

"You must pray to the Lord to make you remember the truth about the beauty of the body. He knows, and he will enlighten you. He himself was absolutely wonderful in bed. He was the greatest lover on earth, ask Mary Magdalene, she was his girlfriend, and

he got his last erection when he saw her standing under the cross."

"That's not true, Jesus never made love to Mary Magdalene."

"How can you be sure? Doesn't the Bible say that they loved each other?"

"Yes, but not in that way."

"What you mean 'in that way', is there anything bad in 'that way'? Don't you remember how she went down on her knees and caressed his feet with her hair. Only a true lover does such things. And why shouldn't he have made love to her? He was a real man, wasn't he? Or do you think he was a priest and preferred boys?"

"Of course not."

"No, he came to give us an example, including the example of how to use our body. A long lost gospel was recently discovered in the Jordanian desert, the gospel according to Mary Magdalene, that tells the whole story."

"You like to joke, Monsieur, but I don't believe you."

"I am the devil, Madame, I never lie. Just ask the priest on Sunday, he will confirm, he knows me."

And off she drives in her car, with many things to ponder.

## **FRIDAY, 1 DECEMBER**

### **UNDRESSING**

For the last two days we have had a disagreement of where to disrobe. She wants to do it at the entrance of the public toilet on the promenade, just above the water's edge when it is high tide at our bathing time. I do not like this place, because it is the toilet and because, in spite of the early hour, too many people pass, comment on our enterprise, and say how courageous we are. I prefer to be inconspicuous. She likes the place because, when there is high tide, it is close to the point at which she likes to enter the water and where there are no rocks. I neither like to order her to my preferred place, nor can I desert her once she has established herself in hers.

I therefore decide to create faits accomplis, to force her to follow me or leave me where I am at her own peril.

I start my walk ten minutes early and arrive at our bathing place well before her. I wait for her at the steps \*\*\* I \*\*\* have chosen for undressing. Her car is not in the usual spot, she has

not yet arrived. Eventually I decide to go into the water alone. I am just about to slip back into my trousers, when she turns up.

"Where have you been, Monsieur, I came early and walked along your path in the opposite direction, trying to meet you. How could I possibly have missed you?"

"Perhaps it was so dark that we passed each other without seeing each other."

"Impossible, it wasn't so dark!"

"Ah, then I know the answer, I saw you approaching, unfolded my wings, and flew over you like a bat. Couldn't you smell the sulphur?"

She goes into the water while I watch. Today I have a new name for her, 'Madame La Sirène'.

"Where did you learn to sing so enchantingly? I do not think I will be able to resist your temptation much longer."

#### **SATURDAY, 2 DECEMBER**

I keep up the play about Madame La Sirène. She has by now proudly accepted that name, and I banter with her while swimming.

From time to time she tries to deflect my vile thoughts from her body by talking about the good Lord: "I think it is the Lord who has arranged for us to meet here. This is a rare and extraordinary coincidence that we both should want to do these mad things in winter and then be attracted to one another. How long will you be staying?"

"Till after Christmas, perhaps till January."

"Do you come regularly to this village?"

"Not really, last time I came was three or four years ago. We have to make the best of the little time we have. If we want to sin in the sea, we must do it now. We haven't got a lifetime. We must make sure we have something to remember when we part. I am a pêcheur\* who wants to catch a sirène\* and wants to turn her into a pécheresse\*.

I start swimming around her in ever closer circles saying: "Neptune entoure la Sirène. The temptation is too strong for him." She enjoys the game as my circles became closer and closer, I keep watching her face, my arms begin to touch her in passing, then I open them and say: "Come, Madame Sirène, swim into my arms. Neptune is waiting. Neptune wants to touch you. Neptune wants to embrace you."

She does not move, but neither does she have the strength to swim away. I take her hands and pull her towards me: "Do not be afraid."

We can stand, the water reaches up to her breast. I put my legs apart, forming a strong triangle and pull her into that triangle. My thighs touch hers from the outside. I press them against hers. She pushes my chest away from her but leaves my legs where they were. Briefly I put my hands on her waist, and then desist. I have achieved enough for one day. We are giggling like children when we leave the water: an achievement for her as much as for me. Are we playing doctor?

"Tomorrow is Sunday, Madame, will you pray to the Lord that he take the temptation away from us? Et ne nos inducat in tentationem?"

"Of course I will."

"But this temptation is rather sweet, isn't it? Isn't it, Madame?"

"Yes, it is."

"Then I will thank the Lord that he has sent you to tempt me, and I will beg him to make the temptation stronger and stronger. I will beg him to make it impossible for me to resist you. There will be no prayer more sincere and more beautiful than that, I assure you, Madame La Sirène. Why don't you say the same prayer whenever you look at the big erection! The Lord sends us temptations because he wants us to indulge, not because he wants us to resist them."

"You are really a devil, Monsieur. But I will pray for you."

"And for yourself, Madame: 'Lord, please make me weak, give me the courage to take what is on offer.' "

She will be back on Monday because she does not swim on the Lord's day, or on that day she has to take her husband to church. She must not fail him because she is trying to convert him. She must press her advantage while she can. After I have walked two hundred yards, her car slowly overtakes me, I turn round and make enthusiastic and encouraging gestures, "good luck, have courage, spot on, you are perfect!".

Over the weekend I am half elated, half worried. Her compliance has been too good to be true. Did I go too far when I was holding her between my legs? But she had not tried to escape.

It is so wonderfully exciting when you can do to strangers what one can not do to strangers. That's why every new acquaintance, and even every flirt, is so exciting. That's why even one-night stands, or short-lived affairs, can be exciting. The pleasure is not only in the senses of the flesh but specifically in the mind.

One of these pleasures is not the novelty of the known sensations, but the fact that they have been so quickly achieved or that they have been achieved at all. That is quite different from the sensations themselves. The feeling of surprise: "This can't be real! This is too unexpected to be true!"

On Sunday I swim alone, as expected, whereas she went to church and, I hope, experienced a sexual transfiguration in the familiar figures, especially the beautiful, and minimally clad, body of Christ on the cross. There is a church in Las Vegas where they have dressed him in a glittering thong. Isn't that body worth kissing in earnest? We must not neglect the potential of our saints to give us sexual ecstasies.

#### **MONDAY, 4 DECEMBER**

I arrive early. Madame is not there. We have a span of five minutes to coordinate our arrival. I wait for ten. She does not come. I am anxious and embarrassed.

Have I gone too far, have I offended her? What would she have told her husband as an excuse for not going out to swim as usual? Would she have left a loophole for herself so that she could change her mind and resume our rendez-vous? Have I, by my selfish proceedings, destroyed her ambition to swim throughout the winter, which she could not do without either me or Salina? What would I say to Salina when she returned, having upset one of her friends? Have I given Salina a bad name by having been so clumsy? Or has she had an innocuous reason for not coming?

#### **TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER**

She turns up again. I greet her enthusiastically, "Madame La Sirène, you cannot imagine how much I missed you. What happened? Where were you yesterday? Why did you not come?"

"I did not come because of you."

"Because of me? What did I do?"

"You were rude, vilain."

"I? I do not understand. Please explain. If I was rude, it was not intentional."

"You made an obscene gesture towards me when I passed you in the car."

"Impossible. What did I do? It must have been a misunderstanding. Madame, I am absolutely serious, please show me the gesture so that I understand. I will explain."

"Your two fingers together ..."

She explained that when gesticulated to her, I had made the O-sign by holding the tip of thumb and index finger together, the sign that in France means "You cunt!".

I explained that I always gesticulate with my fingers rounded and my thumb touching the index finger, and that this doesn't have the same meaning in England that it has in France. I averred the sincerity of my explanations, and she was only too ready to accept.

She must, from the start, have been very ready to forgive me, and very keen to punish me for no longer than one day. Otherwise she would not have returned. If I were a woman, and had taken the gesture seriously, I would have called it a day.

I treat her with great care that day, do not intensify my manoeuvres and return repeatedly to the question of the gesture as it gradually dawns on me what had happened.

### WEDNESDAY, 6 DECEMBER

#### UNDRESSING

Then comes the unforgettable Wednesday. When she has taken off her clothes, I notice that she wears a different swim suit, not one of the usual two. I point this out to her and dutifully express my admiration. She tells me that this is the first time ever she is wearing it. I start wondering why she should premiere a new swim suit in winter, and where she could have bought it at this time of year. I also notice that it is slightly more daring than what she had worn before (more daring by her standards), for it has a décolletage which is like an elongated V going down to her navel. When noticing this, I immediately, and not only dutifully, express my renewed admiration for it and, before we had reached the water's edge, I put my arm around her and draw her close to me. She protests that this was not the reason why she had chosen this new swimming costume. I tell her I knew that, and of course she hadn't, but she looked so beautiful in it, I just had to feel her body while it was still warm and dry.

So far we had always been wet and cold and shivering when touching each other. This is the first warm embrace.

She resists slightly, ever so slightly. As we walk into the water, I point at the bulge in my bikini: "Look at what's happening there. That's your fault."

She laughs knowingly or virtuously: "I know, I must not excite you."

'On the contrary,' I think, 'do excite me for all you are worth,' and give myself a squeeze.



I am happy that she has been forced to acknowledge that something sexual is happening. No more getting away from the true nature of things now.

"Not to worry, the water will quickly cool me down" (it doesn't), I say and swim off.

After some vigorous swimming, I approach her again ...

It is extraordinary (and therefore delightful) how what people (in this case the 'passive' partner in a seduction scene) say differs from what they want to do or do soon after, how quickly the barriers fall, or to watch them falling one by one (I think that is just as delightful and legitimate a pursuit as 'the ultimate'). To call somebody 'Madame' and 'Monsieur' in every sentence (not even 'Madame B.' but merely 'Madame' [Madame tout court]) while your under-water hand rests for half a minute on her crotch, and she is quite content with it, after having said two minutes earlier, when entering the water: "Vous savez, Monsieur, je viens ici pour nager seulement parce que j'ai confiance de vous... Le bon Dieu nous regarde." (You know, Sir, I only come here to swim because I trust you).

Le bon Dieu nous regarde... - But not under water, I think.

The water is icy, that is the price we pay. But normally we stay in for seven minutes before we feel cold. Today we stay in at least 15 minutes without feeling cold or getting bored; in fact we have the sea boiling.

When we enter the water I put my arm around her for the first time, then had my hand on her buttocks, without her rejecting me; then with difficulty persuaded her to quickly touch my buttocks (give her some self-confidence), explaining that there is nothing in the bible or in the catechism which prohibits that.

We are on our way out, but still up to the hips in the water: 'Have courage and grab me between my legs.'

She does it like a shot and gives me a forceful snakeshake -- then withdraws quickly: she does not yet trust her own bravery. We are still on 'Madame' / 'Monsieur' terms.

'What's your name? May I call you "tu", Madame?' Of course.

She is not only pious, talks about le bon dieu et la beauté de la nature, et l'esprit du bon Dieu dans toute la création, but also a realist, and, at the age of 58, will not be so silly as to let a rare opportunity to be 'naughty' (faire des bêtises) pass. Better a fleeting memory than nothing. No youngster will approach her any more. People her own age and older have lost the knack of flirting and seduction, are too shy and diffident. But none of us have lost the desire yet. So we should maintain the skill and the audacity to match our desire, and if everybody (both sexes) did, we could have as much fun as the youngsters.

I have been swimming with her for about two weeks now.

### IN THE WATER

We stay in the water between 10 and 15 minutes, much longer than the usual six or seven minutes, without noticing the time pass. I say: "We are making the water boil. That is why we can stay in for so long. It is not boring when we play together."

I follow her out of the water, see her naked back from the distance as she peels off the top of her swimsuit.

I shout: "Véneronique, turn around and let me see your front." She duly turns and drops the towel with which she is drying herself. Now she becomes daring and proud of herself. Good.

I ask: "When did you buy this wonderful new swim suit, yesterday?"

"No, I've had it for eight years, but I have never worn it."

"Why?"

"My husband did not want me to wear it?"

"Why?"

"He thought it was too revealing."

Well, well, well, I think, he must have been, or be, quite prudish. Poor woman, does she, or did she, get what she needs otherwise?

As we walk to the car I ask about her husband: "Can he still do it?"

"Yes, I have to be patient and help him a little, but it works. Some men can continue for a long time. He is very fit for his age."

But can I believe her? Would she be so happy with the 'light entertainment' I provide by holding her crotch if her husband gave her 'the works'?

I must pretend that I am worried about my own old age and need reassurance. She must not think I want to make fun of her husband. Tomorrow I must ask whether he manages to come and whether he manages to bring her off, and how often they do it. She is so open. No topic is barred. How extraordinary!

I: "It is good for me to know this, so I still have a chance in future. It is harder for men than for women isn't it."

I spend the day writing all this down. What will she be doing? Thinking? Reflecting? Will she be excited by the thought of what has happened? How will she want it to go on? Have we reached the limit, or does she want me to push further? I must make up my own mind what **\*\*\* I \*\*\*** want, because she is not yet ready, I think, to have and pursue her own agenda. Whatever she wishes, she is not likely to demand it loud and clearly. That is my problem now.

#### **THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER**

It is cloudy today and it rains heavily. She does not turn up. Perhaps she fears a storm.

#### **FRIDAY, 8 DECEMBER**

##### **UNDRESSING**

Bright day, no clouds. La Petite is back -- early.

Yesterday her dog has been put to sleep, because he suffered from hepatitis. Her husband Jacques was very sad and cried, and she had to comfort him.

"We went to church together. Then he felt better: 'Everything comes from God and goes back to God', he said. He used not to believe, now I teach him to pray and he is beginning to enjoy it. It is important that he finds God before he dies. He had a stomach cancer operation six years ago. He was lucky and has done well so far. I had to comfort him all day. 'I only have you,' he said in tears as he cried over the loss of his dog.

You, Robert, have many other women. Jacques has only me. Therefore I must not let him down."

She now calls him 'Jacques', rather than 'mon mari'.

She too is very sad. She is also tired. She did not get much sleep last night. I will not harass her too much today. She talks a lot about God, the need to be good ('sage') and to be faithful. I do not contradict her and do not make fun of her as usual.

I only point out that one can be 'good' and at the same time play little games with one's body. Body games do not make us 'méchants'. Perhaps mind games do, but I don't say that. Throughout this affair I have spoken a lot about 'your body' and 'my body', not about 'you' and 'me'.

She agrees that our games are very innocent.

##### **IN THE WATER**

We play just as freely as last time, no holds barred, and her grip on my cock is just as firm as mine on her 'colline'. She

does not want to be seen touching me outside the water because 'the man with the dog' knows her husband. She is more aware of her husband today than last time.

So we play our games under water.

"Les pêcheurs sous-marins", she laughs.

"La sirène devenu pécheresse", I counter.

"Elle prend ton poisson," and so she does.

As we pass each other in the water and smile I say: "We are like children playing doctor."

### DRESSING

We walk from the water to our clothes.

She: "Jacques has no more will to live. He says: 'I'm going to die soon.' That is sad."

I agree. I tell her: "You must keep up his will to live because otherwise he will die for no other reason than lack of will to live. You can give him strength and confidence. But I can give you strength and confidence too, and I can give you some joie de vivre, and you can pass it on to your husband."

We are quite serious about this. She is thinking of entering a convent, of becoming a nun, after Jacques's death. This is her real vocation, she thinks. Only the fact that her husband needs her prevents her from entering now.

I become concerned: "If you become a nun, you cannot have a man and do the nice things we do together, that wouldn't be permitted any more, and you'll miss something. The only solution would be that you do it with the other nuns. You know, they do it together, one woman to another, that can also be nice."

She is horrified: "Non, Monsieur, that is not true!"

"Oh yes, it is. I have met a nun who left her convent because she couldn't stand it any more. She wanted sex with a man so badly. With the other nuns, it was nice, but not enough. You must think about that before you enter a convent.

Do you know what the Spaniards say: 'Una monja es una mujer que se casa con Dios, porque no hay dios que se case con ella'. That means: 'A nun is a woman who gets married to God because she is so ugly that no man would even look at her.' "

And so we reach our clothes.

Two big rocks form a 'niche', where we cannot easily be seen. This time we dress and undress in the same 'niche' among the rocks. There is no reason to keep up 'pudeur' (shame, modesty) any longer.

I walk ahead, whip off my bikini and look back at her. She has averted her head.

"Look over here, Madame," I say.

"I've seen you," she says and smiles mischievously.

"Well, look at me properly. Don't be shy. Look between my legs. My baguette is still saluting you."

She looks and laughs.

I: "Now it's your turn. Show me how much courage you have: display yourself."

She peels her costume down to her hips without embarrassment.

"Well done! Carry on, take it all off."

She hesitates. I come over to her: "Let me hug you then." I touch her nipples, a token gesture, and press her quarter-clad body against my naked body.

"You are not going to rape me," she says, and I am not sure whether this is a question, a statement of fact, or an excuse.

"Of course not. How could I, even if I wanted to, here in the cold and on the rocks. It would be nice to touch your poil though."

I walk away to my pile of clothes.

She: "J'aime les hommes qui peuvent se dominer." ('I love men who can control themselves.', which I misunderstand as: 'I love men who can control me.')

I: "Tu m'aimes parce que je te domine? Tu aimes les hommes forts et dominants, donc?" (You love me because I dominate you? You like strong and dominant men then?)

She: "Non, tu peux te dominer à toi. Ça c'est une chose que j'aime en toi et que me donne de la confiance." (No, you have self-control. That is what I like in you and that makes me trust you.)

I: "Ah, you mean with me you can be sure that I won't rape you."

She: "Yes."

She mistakes my lack of interest for virtue.

She: "You know what I like about you is that you have self-control. That is good. You'll never do bad things. What we are doing is not bad."

I think: Next time I must make her touch my naked cock rather than me trying to touch her buisson (her bush). That will make her feel that she is in control, and it will lower the barriers further. I must say: "Would you like to touch my cock? Come on, go ahead, do it, it doesn't bite, would you like to?" and coax her into doing it.

She drops the towel and lets me see her full frontal, leaning back, pushing forward her hips and proudly stretching her body.

She: "Voilà! That's me!"

I applaud: "That's your body. Now you have thrown your timidity away. Now you are really courageous. That's much more courageous than going into the cold water. You have broken a taboo which society has imposed on you. Don't you feel well like this? You couldn't care less. You don't give a fuck. Tu te fiches de la respectabilité traditionnelle. I think you are a woman longing for liberty. But you have been constrained by the rules of society, by your husband and by your children."

"Yes, we all have to compromise to survive. We have to please our parents, husbands, children, neighbours, priests, employers. It is not easy to be a solitary rebel. We need at least one person to approve of our desires. You came along, you have given me the chance to throw away my clothes, without laughing or looking down upon me. You encouraged me to make the defiant gesture, to grab you between your legs, to hold your sexe, and to be wicked enough to let you do the same to me. You have given me the courage to do what I wanted to do and be myself."

I: "I was the member of society, the stranger, with whom you could break all the rules and allow all the rules to be broken."

We have been much more serious today, not only because of her sadness about the death of her dog but also because there was no more need to tease her, no more need to break down barriers. Not as much as before. The seduction phase was over yesterday. We both know that we cannot go much further but that we have achieved something essential, the dropping of conventions. Not only for the sake of our relationship but also simply as individuals. Even if we part immediately, we will have achieved something that has value for each of us on his own and on her own. It is not in only in preparation of further conversations between us.

It is a tradition that you have 'get to know a woman' first, let her get to know you, before you make love. Talk before you fuck. That sequence can make conversation difficult. The devil's rule can be more effective: if she lets you, fuck first, and you have

nothing to hide. The inhibitions go, then talk without constraint. In a way, that's happening here.

We have achieved that state without actual fucking, but through a defiant confidence building process which for us is as significant as a fuck might be for a couple of youngsters. The obstacles she had to overcome were formidable, considering her initial timidity and her obsession with Christianity.

## SATURDAY, 9 DECEMBER

### IN THE WATER

We are in the water. The usual banter. She seems to have retreated, back into the kingdom of God: "This morning when I unlocked the Church, I prayed to God and he said: 'You must be faithful to me and your husband ...' " She looks anxiously at me. Will I play along?

I do not contradict, I am too lazy this morning, not in the mood for verbal fencing. I pull her close to me, "You are absolutely right", I say, while I caress her thighs and her crotch underwater and let my knuckles brush over her pubis, "It is always good to listen to the voice of God," I rest my hand firmly on her sexe (sic!), "who has brought us together, makes you faithful to your husband, and friendly to me ... Come on, give me a squeeze, you know where!" She lowers her hand ...

"You have so many other women," she says, "but I only have my husband".

"I know."

"But one has to be careful of AIDS."

"How right you are, I will be careful, Sirène. But I don't think we can catch AIDS if I touch your thighs and you feel my cock."

She giggles. I swim away vigorously to work towards my self-imposed goal of 200 strokes, and she follows as fast as she can. No, I think, whatever le bon Dieu told her this morning, he does not disapprove of our pleasures, and she knows it too. There is nothing in the Ten Commandments that says otherwise.

As we leave the water, I invite her to give a goodbye squeeze to my bulge: "This is our last chance. We can't do it when all the world can see as from the promenade." She knows now what to do. She will, of course, have practised on her husband.

She: "We will both have good memories, whatever happens. Perhaps we will see each other again, perhaps we won't. But it will have been nice to have met." She pauses while we walk on. "It's a pity we have to be so 'sage' but, you understand, my husband needs me now ... Who knows, things may be different in the future."

Does she mean 'after her husband's death'? Throwing out a bait for me?

I stay behind to rinse my claquettes. Then I see her back. She has peeled off her swim suit in one go. She picks up her towel, swivels around to face me, raises her arms behind her shoulders, extends the towel tautly behind her head, poses for me, sways her hips, I mimic the movements of a photographer, 'click, click', shout, "Libertine, libertine", she laughs and cries "Vas-y, mon libertin, come here, you rake", I run towards her, rip off my bikini, she drops her towel, we embrace, press cheek against cheek, tits against tits, sexe against sexe.

She: "We are like Adam and Eve."

I: "Trying to find a way into the jungle of paradise? Working out how best to sin?"

Unlike Adam, I try nothing else, we have progressed enough, she is content to see that I want nothing more. It is cold and it starts raining, we must get dressed quickly.

She is still completely naked. Drying herself without inhibition, stretching her white panties, stepping into them. Suddenly there are no more secrets between us. Only a few days ago, she contorted herself trying not to reveal even a glimpse of her buttocks while getting dressed.

"This woman belongs to the world," I think, "not to God, unless it be a God who is the world, a God whom one can fuck, with whom one can fuck, in whose sight one can fuck, rather than one who rules a world of ascetics and eunuchs."

She was a young witch in the sixties and seventies.

I: "We have no more shame!"

"Yes," she cries, "I have no shame. I like to be like this. This is me. I like to be like this with you. I wished everybody were like you. I wished everybody acted like this."

I: "Ah, chérie, I have an idea. When Salina comes back, we will continue dressing and undressing just like this, without warning her. We will shock her, or we will convert her. Let's see what she does when she sees us naked together. Perhaps she cannot be shocked. Perhaps she is already converted. Perhaps she is only waiting for someone emancipated like you to raise the banner of libertinage."

"Let us increase the kingdom of Satan", I mumble.

"But if we do that, perhaps she will think we are sleeping together. That would be bad: she knows my husband."



"Don't worry; I'll explain that to her."

"Okay, we'll seduce her together." She smiles mischievously.

I: "Vive le bon Dieu, vive le beau diable, vive la libertinage!"

She: "Le beau diable, c'est toi!"

I: "Vivent les corps, vivent les chattes, vivent les queues!"

### **DRESSING**

She is now completely muffled up, looks like a gypsy in Siberia. We turn to leave our niche. She walks ahead. Suddenly she turns around: "Au revoir, Robert," and kisses my lips.

As she gets into her car, "Au revoir, mon coeur," I say, having no other endearment at my disposal.

She laughs: "My husband says that to me."

"Au revoir, donc, la Sirène", I say, (next time, I must try 'Chérie'; it won't do to use the same endearment as her husband), "have a nice weekend, see you on Monday."

### **MONDAY, 11 DECEMBER**

#### **UNDRESSING**

She: "We are going a bit too fast. One has to get to know one another first. If one waits for a long time, it is nicer afterwards."

Every day, we are taking three steps forward, two steps back.

"I have to lead a prayer meeting of a group of old ladies this afternoon. I have to tell them what and how to pray. I do not want to behave too madly with you today. Otherwise I will not be able to pray."

"Are you saying that you will not be able to concentrate and that being saucy and playing with sex is not compatible with being a prayer leader?"

"Yes," long pause, "but, of course, we must have some fun too: On doit s'amuser un peu."

#### **IN THE WATER**

"Ta queue is stronger than your head. You must also think of God and of heaven", and she points to the sky, as she so often does.

"Et ta chatte?" (And your pussy?)

She rejoices, I think, in calling my cock a cock (queue). She seems slightly taken aback when I call her pussy a pussy.

We are coming out of the water. She: "I am glad I met you. For a long time, I didn't believe in God and just enjoyed myself. Five years ago, I found God again, but I became too 'severe' (too strict). You have helped to loosen me up, helped me to relax, and serve God in moderation.

I think: Tomorrow I will act pious and say God told me not to touch her. Make her disappointed and hungry. See what she says.

We peel off our bathing clothes, I stroke her wool.

## **TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER**

### **UNDRESSING**

Clouds, rain, it is very dark. My glasses are steamed up. I can hardly recognise Madame when she steps out of the shadows. It is high tide, the water reaches up to the promenade. We will have to change in the entrance of the public toilet. At least our inner layers of clothes will remain dry.

"Your prayers yesterday must have been a success. Le bon Dieu is working for you. We are on the promenade, people pass: today we have to behave. The toilets are a holy place, specially protected by the Lord. He has saved you from my traps."

"What a pity! Is the water rising or falling? Are you sure there is nowhere among the rocks where we can change? I have been dreaming of it all day yesterday, of raising my arms and throwing off my clothes."

I can see her in the shadows outside one of the cubicles completely stripped.

"If anybody comes ...", I say.

"Je m'en fiche, I don't give a fuck."

"I can see your triangle."

"Bermuda", she quips.

"Where the fish disappear."

I do not go over to hug her, do not ruffle her wool like yesterday, I am too much preoccupied with the logistics of getting my clothes off and stacking them in spite of the wind and rain. I have to get into the water. This location does not encourage me to play and be frivolous. Nature is more conducive to playing sex games. If it were a hot summer's day or a sultry

night, perhaps I would find this spot perversely arousing, on account of its very inappropriateness.

She: "I've been thinking. What will Salina say if she sees your erection. Wouldn't that be bad?"

(She seems to think I will always have an erection when I see her naked or take off my clothes. I wish to God it was so.)

I: "Why? It is natural. She has seen erections before. Actually, I think she likes them. She will think it is natural. She will think her brother is normal. Perhaps she will like it. She is only a woman."

### IN THE WATER

"Well, I suppose it's your problem". She walks towards the water. "I have yet another swim suit," she says.

Yes, indeed. This one is strapless, cuts across her breasts horizontally just above her nipples. I mutter my approval.

"Now watch this," she says, "I pray to le bon Dieu," and raises her arms to heaven. Instantly her nipples jump out of their confinement, and I applaud loudly. I reward (Skinner would say 'reinforce') her by caressing her breasts, which are still warm.

Today we swim in a large circle so that we can always see one another, have less banter and more conversation. I do not count my strokes and we are so busy that there is no danger of my leaving the water too soon.

She swims towards me. I wait, expectantly.

"Your mermaid kisses you."

I peer up and down the promenade. She, surprisingly, is less cautious than I. We are so close to the promenade and to the seafront houses. I am aware that, at any time, someone could come out of the shadows. I am cautious even when no one is visible. She is only concerned about visible watchers. If nobody is there, she feels safe. I have no reputation to lose. She has a husband to consider and her position of honour in the local church, which she has to unlock and lock every morning and evening, and where she is prayer leader (God's cheerleader) of the group le rosaire (rosary group). If our heads were seen motionless and close together, people would have to conclude that there must be something exciting going on below water to keep us happy in the icy sea.

So today I do not tempt her below water, except for a cursory touch of her crotch. The good Lord is indeed protecting her. Better than she would like?

Her second marriage was a registry marriage. This husband is a Roman Catholic like her, but not very active. Since the church does not recognise divorce, she is technically living in sin. But her understanding Curé has given her permission to participate in the Eucharist.

She knows an Abbé who lives not far from here, her spiritual director, a man whom she admires and trusts and to whom she tells everything. Everything? Will she be telling him about our encounters? Not before it is over, I hope, otherwise he will stop it. How can he judge it without knowing every detail! There are no convenient abstractions, classifications for what we are doing. Her flirt with the devil. But, how can she tell these details to a man without exposing herself, which she would do if she spoke of the joy of her experience.

If, on the other hand, she spoke of it in a contrite way (which requires omission of the joyful and lurid details, however modest), she would condemn herself before he had even spoken. The Abbé could never judge the issue like an impartial outsider because La Sirène can present the facts only through the filter of her own prejudices. So it will be better for her not to talk but, like Mary, 'ponder all these events in her heart' (Luke 2:19).

She tells me about her pop-out swim suit. She has never worn it. She has more such white elephants. Her husband does not approve of them. Is he a prude?

"If I had a girlfriend, I would want her to show her body to the world in all its beauty. With and without clothes. The more provocative, sexy and beautiful, the better. I would want her to be immodest. I would be proud of her, proud of being with a stunner."

"Yes, but that girlfriend would not be your wife, she would not be yours. That's why you would not mind."

"So it's the fact that you are married which makes all the difference to him?"

"I suppose so."

So she has been buying these 'daring' swimsuits, and there are more of them in her drawers, as a substitute, for the mere purpose of imagining herself in them, experiencing the thrill of buying them, not even waiting for an opportunity to put them on, for there was no realistic hope of one ever arising. My appearance on the scene was, of course, a miracle! What a constraint to live under! I wonder how many married women are in a similar position, repressed in dozens of little ways, only waiting, but not even daring to wait, for an opportunity to present itself.

I understand Jacques too: he is afraid of losing her to a younger man.

### WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER

#### UNDRESSING

Storms overnight. Fairly clear sky and little wind in the morning. No rain. Before sunrise, at ten past eight, an almost full moon still makes me cast a shadow on my sandy path. It is high tide and the water reaches the promenade walls. The sea is agitated. For once we have to walk through the village to reach 'the steps' where we want to undress.

We pass an overhanging rock by the side of the footpath.

I: "That's a good place for making love, during a hot summer night."

"Have you done it?"

I lie: "Yes."

"With one person or with several?"

"Only with one, there isn't space for more. But it is wonderful if you do it with many. That is true lust, true love of the body, sharing, generosity, honesty, no need for a soul."

"So you have done it?"

"Sure, and it was great. But you need people who love the body for its own sake, take it seriously and are not obsessed with dressing it up with an imaginary soul. The soul and love as a precondition for 'making love' is an invention of priests and prudes, who also insist that we cover tits, cocks and cunts. Both coverings are intended to destroy pleasure and happiness. I have nothing against love of souls. But I also want 'loving bodies', mere bodies, to have the right to make love to each other, without participation of the soul. Long live the body-fuck!"

La Sirène is afraid of the waves which hit against the walls, I think there is no risk and it is worth trying. But since she also complains about some pain in her belly, I do not encourage her to enter the water. Let me try it first, I am stronger and the better swimmer. I change on the steps.

It turns out to be no worse than on the preceding days. I find she could have entered. Tomorrow she will.

She tells me that Jacques is very tired and inactive these days. I ask her about love-making with Jacques. I want to see how much of it she has made up. She has told me that he is able to come if she is patient with him, but is he able to make her come too?

"Fellatio," she says.

I: "Well, that's for him."

She: "No, for both."

### DRESSING

I go to swim. When I return, I resume the conversation: "Savez-vous planter le chou?"

She laughs.

I: "On le fait avec la main."

She: "Ou la bouche!"

I want to know about her naughty years.

"I used to take the men and then throw them away. They always wanted to own me, I wanted my liberty, I did not want to be owned."

"So you took your pleasure and then chucked them out. You took the pleasures of the body."

She seems to become defensive. Does she understand my intentions? Does she think I am being judgmental? Is my French not up to the job? Perhaps I only understand half of what she is saying and can express only half of what I want to say. Communication is difficult enough if both partners speak the same language: how much worse must it be when one uses a foreign language!

I feel no objections to the story she is telling me because it means she is able to take her body seriously, to respect her body as such. The devil is the God of the body. God is the devil of the soul.

She: "No, making love without loving is a bad thing. It disgusts me."

I am not sure if she talks about the past, her present opinions or our potential future.

I: "The pleasures of the body are also real. They exist, and they are beautiful. It is not necessary to have 'love' as an excuse to make them acceptable. On the contrary, the absence of love, the concentration on the body, on the senses, can make them particularly exciting. If it is exciting, it is good. It is that simple."

We can lie about love, deceive ourselves. A pure body-fuck is absolutely honest: either we enjoy it or we don't. No deception

is possible. With love there are always deception, imagination, wishful thinking, false expectations. Lust is truer than true love. A whore is more honourable than a married woman because she does not lie about what she is offering and what she expects in return. People who get married never speak the whole truth."

A flash comes across the sky. Someone has photographed me in all my naked beauty. A thunderclap follows. "Is this applause?" I think. "Have I provoked the old fellow or is he getting excited by my salacious talk? Never thought I could be so influential."

It starts raining. I must get dressed quickly.

"When did you stop being naughty? A long time ago? When you were young?"

"No, I carried on for a long time. I stopped only five years ago."



We are walking through the village again. We meet a few people in the street and say 'Good Morning'. She seems concerned. I do not understand why. Tomorrow she wants to go into the water from the promenade, in full view of the whole village. Surely we will not be able to strip there and play any games. Even more people will see us there undressing and dressing than saw us today walking dressed through the village streets. What has changed since yesterday when she positively regretted not being in a hidden spot? Or has she relapsed into God-fearing innocence?

As we part, she gives me an envelope: "This will help you to understand me."

"What if I cannot read your handwriting, can I ask Salina to help?"

"You can show it to anybody. It contains no secret."

As I walk home I hum:

<p>Au clair de la lune, Mon ami Pierrot, Prête-moi ta plume, Mon mari est sot.</p>	<p>My friend Pierrot, sitting in your swing that hangs down from the moon, lend me your pen(is), for my husband has grown senile.</p>
<p>Sa chandelle est morte Et manque de feu. Ouvre-moi ta porte Pour baiser un peu.</p>	<p>His candle is burnt out and has no more fire. Open your doors and let us fuck a little.</p>
<p><i>Mon Ami Pierrot</i></p> 	 <p>Je n'ai pas de plume</p>

At home I open the letter, four handwritten pages with some drawings of fountains, flowers and fireworks. I have difficulty in deciphering her handwriting. I begin by glancing at the whole and forming an impression. Two pages of rhyming poetry: Are all French women able to do this? Do they learn it at school? Or does God inspire them? Two pages of prose. It is not a letter, but more a manifesto, or a religious tract. Here she can say what she wants to say in her own unadulterated voice without being interrupted by my jokes and blasphemies. She had to turn to writing to get that chance. These pages depict her as she was when I first met her, and still is, or wants to be, in spite of all the contradicting desires and emotions which I have brought to the surface.

<p>J'ai commencé, par écrire celà, pour toi</p>	<p>I have started writing this for you.</p>
<p>La vie est don, passage, passage difficile,</p>	<p>Life is a gift a passage a difficult passage,</p>
<p>Mais, quand par la grâce divine le silence de Dieu habite le</p>	<p>but when through the divine grace the silence of God lives in the heart of man, &amp;c &amp;c ...</p>



coeur de l'homme, l'exterieur à lui-même s'appauvrit en même temps, que son "soi-même". Le coeur interiorise un chant qui le dépasse le chant de Celui Seul qui peut dire: "JE SUIS".	
Dieu aime l'homme.	God loves man.
Dieu n'est pas le maître de l'interdit, Dieu veut être aimé et l'aimer c'est aimer toute sa création.	God is not the master who rules by forbidding, God wants to be loved, and to love him is to love all his creation.
L'homme qui donne sa vie à Dieu, ne quitte pas la vie, il aime.	A person who gives his life to God does not leave life, he loves.
Il aime Dieu et cela va de soi qu'il aime toute la création.	He loves God and this love comes from him who loves the whole creation.
Passage, oui, la vie est difficile passage.	Passage, yes, life is a difficult passage.
Comme quiconque, j'ai perçu la beauté de la vie et reçu ses coups.	Like everybody else, I have received the beauty of life and received its beatings.
J'ai cherché sans trouver.	I have searched without finding.
J'ai cueilli sans rien prendre, insatisfaite, insoumise, ivre de liberté. J'ai compris que ma liberté est grande et non sans danger et au cours de années	I have collected without taking anything, unsatisfied, rebellious, drunk of liberty. I have understood that my liberty is great and not without danger and, over the years, I have acquired the certainty that it is not only necessary for one

acquis la certitude qu'il faut du respect les uns envers les autres mais aussi exiger ce respect pour soi-même.	person to respect the others but also to have respect for oneself.
La vie est un don de Dieu et le don est fait dans l'Amour, aussi il se manifeste dans la monotonie, la fantaisie de nos heures qui défilent.	Life is a gift of God, and this gift is given that love, it shows itself even in monotony, the whim of the hours which pass by.
Ta rencontre n'est pas fortuite. Elle n'est pas sans valeur. Rien n'est négatif, sinon la négation que nous voulons avoir sur les événements, les actes. Nous sommes libres.	Meeting you did not happen by chance. It is not without value. Nothing is negative, except the negation we want to have by refusing to accept the events, the acts. We are free.
Chacun a en soi une richesse propre, je veux dire, qui lui est propre.	Everybody has in himself a richness which is peculiar to him.
A chacun de la faire fructifier.	It is up to everybody to make it bring fruit.
Il y a le risque d'accepter de dévoiler sa propre richesse et aussi d'accueillir celle de l'autre.	There is the risk in being prepared to unveil one's own richness and to welcome that of another person.
Franchise, accueil sont essentiels. Dieu a fait en moi place au Vivant, il fait partie intégrante de ma vie, non	Frankness and welcome are essential. God has made space in me for something living, he is an integral part of my life, not in order to deny it under certain aspects, but in order to live in welcoming that which is true, beautiful and if

<p>pour la nier sous certains aspects mais pour la vivre dans la cueillette de ce qu'elle a de vrai, beau et si possible immuable. Pour cela certes il faut non la lutte personnelle insuffisante mais l'aide attentive et paternelle de Dieu.</p>	<p>possible immutable. What is necessary in order to achieve this is certainly not the insufficient personal struggle, but the attentive fatherly help of God.</p>
<p>Sur le chemin de la vie je suis un être perdu, sensible à tout, démuné.</p>	<p>On the road of life, I am lost being, sensitive to everything, destitute.</p>
<p>Alors, comme l'oiseau que se confie au vent, mais douée de raison je fais, de par sa grâce, confiance au Seul que j'aime.</p>	<p>Then, like a bird who entrusts himself to the wind, but devoted to reason, I put, by his grace, my trust in the only one whom I love.</p>
<p>Ce n'est pas un repli d'amour.</p>	<p>That is not a withdrawal of love.</p>
<p>C'est une ouverture vers les autres, vers ceux qui le désirent. Il n'est pas bon de forcer le coeur des autres. Tout se fait, en silence, hors de toute exigence, en sachant qu'ici bas tout disparaît, mais demeurent les sentiments nobles, les pensées qui veulent s'élever au delà de notre orgueil, égoïsme et suffisance ou sottise au ras des</p>	<p>It is an opening towards others, towards those who desire it. It is not good to force the heart of others. Everything is done, in silence, away of all necessity, in knowing that on this earth everything will disappear, but what will remain our noble sentiments, the thoughts which want to rise above our pride, selfishness, self-importance or stupidity au ras des pâquerettes, as they say.</p>

pâquerettes (comme on dit)	
----------------------------	--

What do you prefer, what is more real:

If someone phones you and says:  
"I love you, let's say the rosary together",

Or if somebody takes your hand and says:  
"Let's fuck!"?

I know what I would choose.

These lines are my first reaction to her manifesto.

#### THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER

Shall I tell her what I really think of the text I had to copy last night to make it legible and to make the sentences comprehensible at a glance?

I cannot accept them: They are not merely wrong, they are meaningless.

One cannot banter with written text to avoid a Yes or No, remain polite and noncommittal, to avoid taking up a firm stance. This is another type of siren song, the sledgehammer of divine love coming down upon me with a dictatorial firmness that does not brook doubt and contradiction, or a tanker load of syrup crushing me.

I tried to seduce her, whereas she is laying down the law. Hers is the absolute truth.

When we meet, I shall return her handwritten sheet together with my typed copy and ask her to correct my spelling and any grammatical mistakes.

I will tell her, and I revert to 'Madame': "Your text, Madame, c'est un tas de banalités. Plain nonsense. Just words, just phrases which do not mean anything. You keep repeating them because they sound nice, and you feel good because you have invented them and believe yourself a poet. That is not God. That's an idol you have created out of words and out of your vanity. A mirror of your own vanity. You can go on forever stringing together words and sentences like this. Platitudes. Nothing but the work of imagination which does not have a body to hold on to. I wish you luck, Madame. But mark my words: body, cock and pussy (corps, queue et chatte) is real. Grab them while you can. When you can't, you may fantasise about that imaginary God. But remember it's only a fantasy.

By the way, how do you know all these things you have written down? They aren't in the Bible. Did God appear to you in a vision? If so, how do you know it was not the Devil? How do you know God was not lying? How do you know God does not always lie? Because the Pope says so? Is the Pope infallible? Who told you the Pope is infallible? Your friend? How does he know? Is your friend infallible? Who told you all the rubbish you have written is true? How do you know the Bible does not lie? How do you know the priests and their congregations are not stupid? The priests have to talk this nonsense all year long, otherwise they will be unemployed. Their salaries are bribes for lying. They have done it for so long, they can't think straight any more. I will not join your chorus of compulsory jubilation."

### UNDRESSING

That's what I wanted to say but I didn't. We had to fend with the weather, the waves and the lack of time. So I said merely, "Madame," (I am so much more comfortable with 'Madame' than with her Christian name), "Madame, I did not like your text at all. But I have typed it out, please correct the mistakes in my copy."

I am not pushing very hard these days. Am I a good devil or a lazy devil?

The sea is agitated and I insist on going to "the steps" to change. She accedes. We pass the overhanging rock and I start telling her, again, stories about group sex under that rock.

"But it is right next to the path. People will see," she asks with surprise.

"That makes it better. Half the people who pass ask if they can join in."

"Really, as many as that?"

"Yes, I counted."

"But what about AIDS?"

"You take precautions and use your hands and feet, or your body."

Now I know why she wants to swim in full sight of the village rather than at this spot. She has taken the group-sex stories seriously all along and is afraid the locals will think we have been sleeping together if they see us emerge from the path of ill repute. Darling Jesus!, I think, as if it weren't too cold, wet, windy and hard underneath that rock for two people, to say nothing of five. I wouldn't even want to fuck Madonna or her daughter Gomorrah in this spot, to say nothing of a church mouse.

### IN THE WATER

In the water we are preoccupied with wind, waves and her fear, but we manage token gestures of the usual familiarity.

### DRESSING

We are naked again as we dry ourselves, I do not bother to touch her, having achieved my aim. She mistakes my lack of interest for laudable self-control: "Men are so stupid. So many men come, still, and want me to take my clothes off and ... you know what ..., and when I chase them away, they call me 'méchante' (nasty old hag)."

"Where do you meet these men, in church?"

"No, not in church, I don't go there so often anyway. I don't spend all my time in church."

She got married at the age of 22, and that marriage lasted for 17 years. That husband was sexually enterprising, a child of his time. He wanted her to join him in group sex sessions: "But I had three little children to bring up. How could I? He sank so low!"

"So you never did? What a pity for you!"

"No, he went on his own."

"And why did you get divorced? Because of that?"

"No, by mutual consent."

"Not because you converted to Catholicism?"

"No, that happened only five years ago."

"Only five years of insanity and hallucinations? Thank God! Then you can still be cured!"

She laughs: "My husband would be surprised if he could see me naked with another man."

"I bet he would. Perhaps he would like to join us for some group sex."

Shivering I run home, while she drives to Mass.

---

**FRIDAY, 15 DECEMBER****UNDRESSING**

Clear sky. The moon casts sharp shadows as I leave the house at ten to eight. It is not easy to flirt and lark around when you are shivering with cold, as we are when we take off our clothes. Successful flirting and seduction in the ice and snow was not part of Salina's bet.

**IN THE WATER**

She swims towards me: "The mermaid kisses her Neptune," and collects her Judas kiss. The pussy handshake in the water has now become a ritual: Come hell and high water, I put my hand between her legs, palm turned up, and raise her in the water while she rests her hands on my shoulders.

"Elevation", I say.

"Aquatic ballet," she replies.

"Hoc est enim corpus tuum", I respond.

I push my left thigh forward, and she descends on it and grips it tightly with her thighs. "That's a fair thought," I think, "to lie between a mermaid's legs."

"I feel like a water lily," she says, "rooted in the ground and rocked by the waves."

She giggles when I ask how she lost her virginity: "I was a student then, 17, and he was 19. I had to seduce him, he was afraid. We were both virgins, I too was afraid, but my curiosity was stronger than my fear. I was always bold and enterprising "

"That was the time of 'Bon Jour, Tristesse', wasn't it?"

"Yes, Françoise Sagan. Those were the days."

**DRESSING**

We get dressed while the rain is coming down. Her mind returns to the orgies in the grotto: "Have you been here since summer?"

"No, I only arrived in November."

"But then it must have been too cold for sex in the grotto."

(Oh good, she is taking my orgies stories seriously.)

"Ah, that was a few years ago."

"Did Salina join in as well?" (I would like to say Yes, that would be spicier, but I have to think of Salina's reputation. Hers is important. She has to live here. For me it is better to have none, or a bad one. People with a bad reputation have more fun -- and vice versa (inverted vices).)

"No, she doesn't even know about it. Perhaps she would have spoilt our fun."

That sounds realistic enough. I must not lay it on with a trowel, otherwise she will not believe my stories.

### **SATURDAY, 16 DECEMBER**

#### **UNDRESSING**

Clear skies, air quite cold and windy. La Sirène has fallen into conversation with the 'man with the dog', who assumes she is my sister. "I can see the resemblance," he says when we agree.

"Now, if we misbehave," I say to her afterwards, "your husband will call it adultery, and the man will call it incest. We can kill two gods with one stone. One more such benefit and the sin will be worth doing. Pity you aren't my brother, otherwise we could commit sodomy at the same time."

Is she becoming more assertive? As we pass the toilets, she insists that we change there. I am cold and have no desire to argue.

"As you wish," I say, "I am changing at the steps."

She enters the toilets while I walk away without looking back. When I arrive at the steps, I see that she has followed me. One battle won, I think.

The wind is so lazy today, it passes right through us.

"This is terrible," she says, "let's leave it for today."

"We mustn't," I say, and continue undressing, "get off your clothes fast: there is no wind in the water. We must not break the routine. If we don't go in today, we won't do it tomorrow either, and the project will be over. Moreover Salina won't start again when she comes back and finds that we have not been able to continue."

#### **IN THE WATER**

She accedes, I am first to wade into the sea, she follows; the water, too, seems colder than yesterday.

"Come for the elevation," I call, anxious to have the essentials finished and done with and not to let good habits fall into



disuse. "The divine ballet, let all the world bend their knees," I mumble as I raise her. She warns me not to mock the Eucharist and explains the ambiguity of the word I used. But I am not Robert Le Diable for nothing. I had said 'ballet' already and established my meaning, "n'est-ce pas?". And Holy Mass is obviously not a Helly Ballet or a Hullabaloo.

It is remarkable how absurd our setup is, no love, no desire, time confined to a few minutes of dressing, undressing and swimming, the struggle with cold, rain and hail, the most unpromising victim imaginable, an anti-story if ever there was one. What little I learn about her, I have to dig out in daily instalments. I have to shout abrupt questions at her to be heard in the wind. I understand only half her answers and have to fill in the rest. When we are dressed, she rushes to her car and I home to get warm.

I: "Pity I wasn't the chap you screwed when you were seventeen, what was his name again?"

She lets out a scornful roar: "Ah him! I haven't got an idea. I wonder if I ever knew. I never saw him again after that. But he did his job, he bust my cherry."

I want to ask where they met, what they did, how they parted, how she felt, did she come [I have no doubt that he did], but it is too cold to ask any more. She will not be in the mood to be expansive, she has given off her give-away laugh, and I have my quote for the day.

### DRESSING

We are getting dressed, she is standing completely naked on the steps. I make no attempt to approach, too anxious to get into my clothes.

"If anybody comes ...," I say.

She: "Who cares!"

Perhaps the cold and the wind has made her unconcerned about anything except drying herself and getting dressed in the most convenient way. Trying to be modest and to hide various parts of the body, merely in order not to offend the odd prude who may be passing or looking, is certainly inconvenient and troublesome. La Sirène, who now calls me 'Neptune', has become a pragmatist right down to the bone.

"If anybody passes," I resume, "they will thank their lucky stars, the men to see you, the women to see me."

I do not understand her reply and shout something about the beauty of her body to make my meaning clear. She laughs scornfully: "Puh, don't call my body beautiful, Jacques has told

me how men think. They call me beautiful but all they want is 'tirer leur coup' (shoot their load)."

I apply myself to learning that expression rather than concerning myself with its import. Here is the sour grapes recluse, the closet cynic, the converted sinner letting off the platitudes, generalisations and prejudices which justify her exit from the world and make her feel superior, regardless of whether they fit the situation. She rejects those who do not want her anyway. Perhaps she converted just in time.

I, for one, have no wish to "shoot off my load". It's one of the beauties of this setup that it cannot come to that. I can try to corrupt her mind, sow doubt, but in this howling weather I am safe of her. I have less to fear than Mephistopheles had of Martha.



Nun mach ich mich beizeiten fort!  
Die hielte wohl den Teufel selbst beim Wort.

(I'd better make myself scarce while I can:  
this woman is not beyond holding the devil  
himself to his promises.)

(Goethe: Faust, Martha's Garden)

Her haughtiness merits punishment. I will pay  
her back. First of all let's find out exactly what  
she means.

"Which do you mean, that men flatter women  
merely to get into their panties, or that they  
will screw them however ugly they are?"

"They'll screw them even if they are ugly like  
sin," she beams, happy with the clarity of the  
formulation I have offered, "in this respect you  
are all alike, aren't you?"

"How right you are, Madame, and do you know how it is done? We throw a towel over the woman's face while we do it, so we don't have to see how ugly she is. The English even have a proverb for it: 'You don't look at the mantelpiece when you're poking the fire.'. But it's not only men who are like this. There are many women who have such a fire between their legs that they just come up to you in the street and ask if you can spare them a shot. It has happened to me often enough."

She shudders with disgust but I continue to teach her the ways of the world: "Yes, it's true. What is a nice man to do then? Tell her 'Sorry, Madame, you are too ugly', or be kind and put her out of her misery? In such a situation it is better for the woman if the man is helpful, and it is good for the man to have a towel: without the towel I might not even get a hard-on. You know that towels were originally invented for that very purpose, by a woman of course, because many women would die of frustration without it. In Italy towels are called veroniche (say: ve-ro-ni-ke) because they were first made in Verona. It was a man, of course, who discovered later that towels can be useful in the kitchen too."

She looks at me in amazement: "I must ask my husband if that is true."

"You do that, or you might ask your Abbé. He knows all about veroniche. I'll tell you something else, there have been days when I have been so exhausted -- you know why, I don't like saying No, you know -- that I have prayed to God not to send me another woman that day and at least let me rest on the Sabbath. On the other hand, when it's not too many, 'on s'amuse,' men and women, as you rightly say.

Happy weekend, La Sirène!"

"Happy weekend, Neptune!"

Tomorrow is Sunday, she will not be there, thank hell, and I will have time to digest the events of last week.

## MONDAY, 18 DECEMBER

### UNDRESSING

I: "I have a surprise for you. I want to thank you for having taught me a new expression in French and give you something in exchange for your telling me all about the Lord."

I give her folded sheet of paper: "This is about how they worship the ladies in La Rochelle, les filles de La Rochelle."

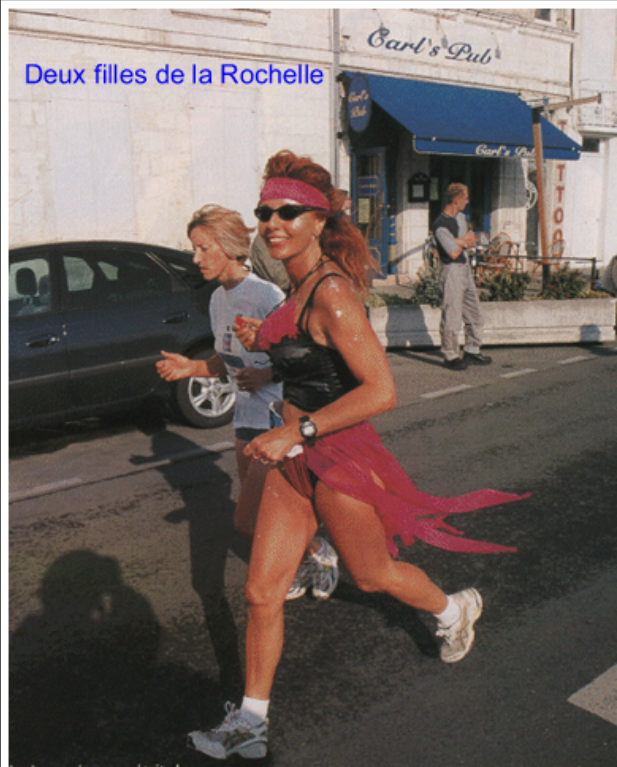
She: "Ooooh, les filles de La Rochelle, c'est salace," she says gourmand-like, licks her lips, and her eyes sparkle, "juicy like a cow on heat. We used to sing that when we were students. But today I wouldn't dare to repeat the words!"

"I have the words on my computer but you'll have to teach me the tune."

"I'll do that, and the rhythm too -- one of these days," and while we look for a suitable niche among the rocks, she chants the introit:

1 Les filles de la Rochelle Chouïa barka zizi bono chatouille moi les pruneaux-ze ! Les filles de la Rochelle Ne sont pas bégueul' du tout (bis)	The girls of La Rochelle liked to have their plums tickled and were as foul-mouthed as they come.
2 Ell'sportent des chemisettes... Qui n'leur vienn'nt mêm' pas au g'noux (bis)	They wore teeny weeny miniskirts, which didn't even reach their knees,
3 Le tailleur qui les à faites ... A regardé par dessous (bis)	and the tailor who made them had to look underneath.
4 Il a vu une chapelle, ... Qui n'est pas cell' de Saint-Cloud (bis)	He saw that there was a chapel, and its patron was not Holy Grail but Holy Nail, it was not Saint Cloud but Saint Clou.
5 Pour entrer dans cett' chapelle... Il faut se mettre à genoux (bis)	In order to enter that chapel, one had to go down on one's knees
6 Il faut présenter un cierge, ... Qui n'aie pas de mèche au bout (bis)	and offer a candle without a wick.
7 Car s'il y avait une mèche, ... Ca foutrait le feu partout (bis)	Since, if there had been a wick, the fire would have spread everywhere
8 Et les pompiers d' la Rochelle, ... N'en viendrait jamais à bout (bis)	and the firemen of La Rochelle would never have been able to put it out,
9 Et le gars de la Rochelle, ... Pourraient plus tirer leur coup (bis)	and the chaps of La Rochelle would no longer have been able to shoot their load."

We banter about this text, which contains the trigger words 'tirer leur coup'. But for chanting we turn to another version, more familiar to her. I ask qu'elle nous serine la mélodie, and we start with the first four lines. After two lines she forgets the words (well well well, her thighs are no longer as loose as she would like them to be?), so we only do the tune. I ask her to memorise the words for tomorrow. Here they are for the elevation of all body worshippers who would love to live in La Rochelle:



1 Sont les fill's de La Rochelle  
Qu'ont armé un bâtiment  
Ell's ont la cuisse légère  
Et la fesse à l'avenant.

Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole  
Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.

2 Sont parties aux Amériques  
Un matin, la voile au vent  
Ont choisi pour capitaine  
Une fille de quinze ans.

Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole  
Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.

3 Nous n'avons pas besoin d'hommes  
Disaient-elles à tout venant  
Mais au bout de six semaines  
Ell's avaient le cul brûlant.

Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole  
Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.

4 Un beau soir, une frégate  
Apparut sur l'Océan

The girls of La Rochelle  
have equipped a ship.  
Their thighs are loose  
and so are their buttocks.

Ah! The leaf is flying away, flying away  
Ah! The leaf is flying away, in the wind.

One morning they sailed away,  
bound for the Americas, with full sails,  
and chose for their captain  
a 15-year-old girl.

Ah! The leaf is flying away...

We do not need any men,  
they all said with one voice,  
but at the end of six weeks  
they had their tail on fire.

Ah! The leaf is flying away...

One beautiful evening, a frigate  
appeared on the ocean

Pleine de jolis pirates De beaux gars appétissants.  Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.	full of handsome pirates, most appetising young men.  Ah! The leaf is flying away...
5 Elles allèr'nt à l'abordage À coups d'sabre et à coups d'dents Ell's y prirent l'avantage Et se ram'nèr'nt des galants.  Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.	The girls boarded the ship with sabre blows and fighting with their teeth. They won the battle and carried the gallants away.  Ah! The leaf is flying away...
6 Et sous la lune joie Étendues sans vêtements Ell's ont écarté les cuisses Tout's sur le gaillard d'avant.  Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.	And in the light of the joyful moon stretched out without clothes they spread their thighs, each of them riding a young cock.  Ah! The leaf is flying away...
7 Ont baisé à perdre haleine Jusqu'au clair soleil levant Et c'était la capitaine Qui menait le mouvement.  Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.	They fucked until they were out of breath, right until sunrise and it was the pretty captain who directed their movements.  Ah! The leaf is flying away...
8 Le lend'main le beau navire Repartit vers le couchant Et les fill's de La Rochelle Le cul frais allaient en chantant:  Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent.	The next day, their good ship continued its voyage towards the West, and the girls of La Rochelle, their tails refreshed, sailed away and sang:  Ah! The leaf is flying away...
9 "J'ai perdu mon pucelage Au milieu de l'Océan. Il est parti vent arrière Reviendra z'en louvoyant:  "Ah ! la feuille s'envole, s'envole Ah ! la feuille s'envole au vent."	"I have lost my virginity in the middle of the ocean. We left with hind-wind and we will return tacking:  "Ah! The leaf is flying away..."

So went the hymn, and we threw ourselves into the floods to extinguish the fire or rather to stop one from being started by all this filthy talk.

### IN THE WATER

"Come for the elevation," I call, "it's your turn today," and raise one leg as high as I can to pretend that I'm using ballet language. The poison I offer has to be disguised as Bénédictine. She approaches instantly and opens her legs but, inadvertently, we glide into the position which she calls 'the double-V'.

"I feel like an alga," she says.

"Algue du mal," I mumble.

"And now the elevation. You are the priestess today. You have to offer the good Devil (sic!) to the bad lord (sic!)."

I look skywards and raise my upturned hands. I wink, she grins, hesitating for a minute whether to protest or to enter into the blasphemy. Her hands reach for my crotch, but she has no firm foothold, I topple backwards, she goes under and has to swallow a mouthful of holy water.

I ask about her conversion. What the hell motivated her to give up her gay life and devote herself to the good lord. Did she see old age approaching, no more chances of 'pulling them in' with her withering body? Was it the collapse of a passionate affair that induced her to seek her pleasures in heaven rather than starting the next hot encounter?

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, ..., for where your treasure is, there will his cock be also (Matthew 6: 20-21)", the devil crows.

"Nothing like that. I had been married to my present husband for 15 years at the time. Jacques had a niece, eight years younger than me, I did not know her very well, for she lived in Sweden, but she had joined the Moonies. She started writing to me and wanted me to join her sect. I was afraid of them, and started defending myself. Therefore I had to think hard about my own religion, which I had put to rest for such a long time. I prayed for help and looked for priests who could guide me. That's how I found my Abbé.

He is not an ordinary priest but an abbot, about 68 years old. But he is wise, generous and gentle and understands the world and its temptations. He is not a dictator, listens to everybody and tries to help if he can. A saintly man.

Like St Augustine, I realised what a beautiful religion Christianity was, I learnt to see the beauty of the creation and of the creator, I put all that into the letters to my niece, and I have not looked back ever since.

That's how I found out that I could write well, and how much joy I obtained from writing beautiful things. Now I do it all day long, just for my own pleasure."

"Have you ever been involved with another sect?"

"Never."

"So the attempt to rope you into one religion had the effect of ending your indifference and returning you to another?"

"Exactly."

### DRESSING

Before we get dressed, I caress her pussy.

"My little fur, it is getting lighter."

"Still dark and fiery enough to do a good job in hell," I say and have at last found a lead-in for the question that politeness forbids ever to ask, namely whether the black colour of her head hair is natural? I have been wondering about that ever since I first learnt how old she was.

"How do you keep your head hair so black? Do you have to dye it often?"

"Occasionally. There are just a few strands of white hair I have to deal with."

By indirections find directions out: in this perverse game I find it easier to talk about pubic hair (poil) than about public hair (cheveux). I try to recall Hamlet's angry words about the deceptive art of make-up:

"I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go."

Today she dresses her torso first. She puts on her anorak before she climbs into her panties. Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. (sic! space before apostrophe!)

She bends over to search for the knickers in her bag and presents her bare ass to me like on a plate. The devil indicts, he does not miss a chance. My index finger shoots forward as far as it can go to whatever gate it might reach.

"My husband would be surprised," she marvels.

"I bet he would."



I wriggle my finger between her cheeks.

"Every day a little step further," she grins.

"That's the devil's way. It is sweet and leads to heaven. Have you ever been éculée?"

"No. ... All right, yes, but it wasn't too good, I think when one makes love, there has to be affection in it."

... "I don't really know you at all," she wonders.

"You know all there is to know: I am Robert the devil and you like my body. That is all that matters. You don't want to know anything else. The body is the only thing that is real. That is the devil's gospel."

She: "There you are right: the devil's gospel. But you ask me so many questions. Why?"

"I am curious about you. Is that wrong? Does that upset you? Since I must not shoot off my load, I have to ask questions. Which would you prefer?"

## **TUESDAY, 19 DECEMBER**

### **UNDRESSING**

Warm, calm, quite dark when I set out at ten to eight.

She starts the conversation: "I was unkind (pas gentille) to Jacques last night. Perhaps I was in a bad mood. But he behaved badly too. We were arguing about the money that is to be sent to Africa, how much, and whether it is to be given to an individual or an organisation. Then he made toc-toc to his forehead. I don't like to be called an idiot, so I became very angry and said some very harsh things to him."

I: "What did you say?"

She: "He keeps saying 'I'll soon die'. I told him: 'Stop talking about that, or do it, and make sure it is funny. Think of something!' That wasn't a very nice thing to say, was it?"

I am not sure whether she makes her confession with contrition or with pride, or whether she is trying to send out a message. She started the subject out of the blue when I arrived.

I: "Well, not really nice. Why did you do it?"

She: "He is irascible, was worse when he was younger though. That gets me angry because it is so unreasonable. I can have a bit of a temper too. I married him within less than a year of my divorce because he was so kind to my children, who were then between 13

and 16, three of them, they had come popping out one each year. Jean-Yves, my first husband, treated them badly even though they were his. He beat them more than was necessary, but he never beat me. Jacques was a godsend then. But at my age it is difficult to be married to someone so much older."

"Why?"

"Because he is tired of life, and he has no enjoyment other than me."

"Have you ever had another man while being married to him?"

She gives a firm Yes. I praise her guts: "Well done, euge, euge! Was it nice?"

"Yes."

I wonder why Jean-Yves gave her so many children if he did not like them. Was he not asked? Why did she not use contraceptives?

### IN THE WATER

We walk into the water.

"I don't know what it is that makes men run after me. I chase them away, all of them. I do nothing to attract them. But they still come."

"Thank God they do. You need a prick from time to time. It is like a good medicine. How would you feel if there were none on offer when you need one!"

She is taken aback, wants to deny the diabolical doctrine instinctively, hesitates for a second, smiles archly and says; "Yes. On s'amuse. That's necessary."

I swim vigorously, swim 'lengths', studiously avoiding her. I want her to chase me or get nothing. As we pass each other, I see her turning towards me, look brazenly into her eyes, wonder whether to evade her, decide to let her approach. She wants the elevation, it takes a man to do it, as I point out to her, "not only in a ballet but during mass too, that's why priests have to be men."

"But mass is not a ballet."

"But it is magic and cannibalism, an infernal ballet I would say. Imagine the priests doing the pas d'élévation." I drag some drifting seaweed out of the water and stuff it into her swimsuit to hang over her shoulder and over her breasts.

... I: "I will have difficulty in persuading Salina to leave home so early. She doesn't like to walk when it is still dark."

"For me today's timing was ideal. If I leave only a little later, Jacques might come along. I cannot stop him. Fortunately he likes to get up in peace, have a leisurely bath &c. I rush out without breakfast on the pretext that Salina will be waiting. If he comes once, he might come always. Therefore it is important not to let it happen for the first time."

"I'll do my best to persuade Salina."

### DRESSING

We dress. She is naked. She shows me her left breast, some tiny scars which I cannot even recognise after she has pointed them out to me. I am too cold to be wanting to concentrate. Some lumps were taken out there. I am horrified.

She: "Don't worry, it was a long time ago, just a precaution, and everything is all right now."

She is still naked, bends down again. My finger does not shoot forward today. I do not want to make a habit of it, -- and I do not want to go further.

Thank God for the cold environment and the lack of opportunity. Whatever she may say, mentally she is ready for me now. But I am quite unready for her and will always be whatever my prudish friends may say, when they see me being attracted to, and having fun with, many women. "You would fuck absolutely any woman", they say. I rather disdain 'fucks per se' and want them only with very special people, right now only with one woman, and that is not La Sirène.

She points at my drooping willow: "It has become 'sage et calme' now."

She is right, we have rapidly gone through the usual phases of a sexual relationship: courtship, sexual excitement, boredom -- without even needing to have a real fuck. Aren't the sins of the mind so much less cumbersome than the sins of the flesh! What a relief! Doesn't she overestimate the need of men to shoot off their load!

She: "I like the way you look at my body. Frank and open. Not sly and from the side. Most men look at you askance, half embarrassed, half curious. As if I were something dirty. I cannot stand that."

"Go shew yourself unto the priests" (Luke 17:14), I say.

Obediently she raises her left leg and rests her foot on a boulder.

"La Chapelle", I say, bend a knee and caress her pussy.

She has to go to chapel for mass today.

"Don't forget to offer the candle without wick," I say in parting.

### WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2000

I: "There is one of your swimsuits I have not seen yet, number five."

"Yes, I have five of them, a red one, a black one, the one with the tall V, the one which makes my tits jump out, and the two-piece one."

"The bikini".

"No, a bikini is something else again. You should have seen the bikinis I used to wear. They were just this size," she covers her mound with her hand, "no more. When I went to the beach with my little children, (I was only 25 at the time but had three children already, one every year,) the boys used to buzz around me. They thought I was only looking after these children. They were so shocked when they realised that they were mine -- rather disappointed.

### UNDRESSING

I tell her about a friend who is coming to spend Christmas with me and Salina: "Could you please find out the time for midnight mass in the cathedral? This woman is a Roman Catholic, very pious, and always likes to go to a festive Mass at Christmas."

She raises an eyebrow: "You are not lucky with the women you meet, are you."

"I am. I've been lucky with you. You've been an extraordinary find! You are a very nice and special woman, not because you talk so much about the good Lord, that's a venial aberration, but because for most of your life you have worshipped your body. Your present lapse will therefore be forgiven you. Ego te absolvo, for I, the devil, am a merciful devil, full of compassion, grace and truth. If only I had found you when you were 17, before you had your brats, imagine how we would have sinned together! But how do you know I wasn't present in all those lovely cocks you have accommodated in your life? Where there is fun, there I am. I am omnipresent. Trust me. Ubi voluptas et amor, ibi ego sum. (Where there is lust and love, I am always there.)"

She: "Well, you have to pray for me when you go to the cathedral."

I think: "Isn't it I who needs your prayers?".

I say: "I will, but do you think the good lord will listen to me, of all people? Will he not listen to you? Does it matter to him how many people come to him with the same request? He certainly didn't listen to the Jews who prayed to him in the extermination camps. Hadn't you better ask a saint for intercession? Or do you think a prayer from the devil is better than no prayer at all? Perhaps you had better pray for me, but I sincerely hope that the lord will not hear you because I do not want to be saved. I am quite happy where I am, and there is nothing nicer than fornicating in hell."

I think: "But I will pray for you, and I will make sure many other people do. For you are a good soul and therefore I like you in spite of your divine obsessions. This life can be hard. And if praying to a dead God makes anybody happy, it is a good thing. Praying is no worse than fucking. Both are illusory pleasures, and both bring temporary relief."

#### THURSDAY, 21 DECEMBER

##### UNDRESS

##### THE PERSISTENT TUNE

Her car arrives at the beach with the punctuality of an Auschwitz cattle train. I hear nothing but see the headlights appearing, approaching, rolling smoothly, coming to a stop: like a practised manoeuvre. I wave a folded sheet of paper, *Les Filles de La Rochelle*, at her, the first version. I croak lines 3 and 4 at her, the lines she had conveniently forgotten yesterday:

"Ell's ont la cuisse légère  
Et la fesse à l'avenant."

Pity I have the voice of a raven. My club-foot has been replaced 30 years ago, by a designer spare, stolen from a fallen angel, but I will not entrust my vocal cords to human surgeons, who may be in the pay of the Pope. My voice is essential for my operations: better a croaky voice than none at all. I do not want to be confined to putting pornography on the Internet. If people can satisfy their lusts on the Internet, they will forget the skills of mutual seduction and commit only virtual sins. That is not good enough for me.

"Oh, Robert," she moans, "that diabolical tune has been going around in my head day and night since yesterday," (and the text too, I hope), "I just cannot stop it. I've been fighting against it, I am desperate."

"Let's lease the tune to the Salvation Army. It will make us a fortune. It's a jolly tune and these were jolly girls. They ought to be sainted like Madonna and the Spice Girls, and good Christians all should imitate them. Ours would be a happier

world. Your thighs too would be better off for it. You should capture a young pirate again. You are so talented!"

I rejoice in my initial triumph. Now I have to make it permanent. Turn it from a short-term worry into a long-term obsession, gradually increase the retention spans, drill and re-drill it to perfection, after one day, two days, four days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, four months, six months, and then revise at half-yearly intervals, "to make sure it is nevermore forgotten," I croak. Not even a brain surgeon will be able to remove it. It will remain there till death them do part.

I have not wasted my time. My tune pursues her. My revenge for her having disdained men who want to shoot off their load. Whenever she sees a crucifix, she will see an erection, will wonder what she is missing by loving this dead and yet so lifelike man. She will look at his appetising canga and fantasise about the desirable eternally 33-year-old member that it hides, divine, so powerful that it could satisfy forever all the girls of La Rochelle, to say nothing of the grenouilles de bénitier (holy-water frogs) in all the churches of the world, who have wisely turned to him when human lovers lost interest. How wonderful, she will think, it would be to see that cock, to take it out of its canga (wouldn't a G-string have been sufficient?), to kiss it, swallow it, bring it to life, shine it, out-shine Monica Lewinski, milk him like a cow, let her cerebral love and passion become real, feel her own passion rise; 'on le fait avec la bouche', hums her brain; he could do something better for her, he is beautiful and young enough, but he is nailed to the cross, poor devil, cannot move, must not move, must keep absolutely still while millions of women and his beloved homosexuals direct their passions at him, must not move, or his hands and feet will ache excruciatingly, but now she has succeeded, his milk shoots in pulsating jets into her mouth, over her face, her body, the whole world. Who wants to drink blood when he can have milk! Who wants to be a cannibal!

Yes, I haven't done badly at all. She doesn't even have to go to church to have these joyful experiences. Crucifixes with the bonhomme are everywhere.

When she goes to church and the host is elevated, she hears bells ring in the tower to announce to all the village and all the world the sacred moment when He descends again, but she will think of our hellish ballet in the water, she herself being the host, shamelessly and therefore joyfully held by the crotch and offered to the God she loves. Yesterday I started pulling an imaginary bell-cord and saying 'ding ding' to mark our kind of elevation. The analogy is now quite clear and she no longer finds it offensive.

Pavlov would have been proud of me seeing me anchor my infernal hooks in her. She lives in a world in which there is a dichotomy between the pleasures of the flesh and the joys of the divine, between God and his creation. It is still powerful and all-

pervasive and only superficially sneered at by the young when they live together in sin and screw ad libitum. It is superficially and fraudulently eased by the priests and their henchmen, fighting for the survival of their authority, when they concede that the joys of the flesh are legitimate, provided we partake in them within the laws of God and in the spirit of God and in gratitude to God and regard them as sacred. Slippery arguments these are. Too slippery and elusive to be combated with reason. Whatever I say about the pleasures of the flesh, she says, she has known it all along ... Well, but not quite. I must re-programme her emotionally. I attach a sexual meaning to each sacred symbol, draw the divine into the gutter, as the priests would say, and make the gutter divine. The divide is destroyed. The rainbow is no longer needed. No longer is there 'fornicatio abs deo', fornication against God, all fornication is 'fornicatio per deum, cum deo, et in deo', fornication through him and with him and in him. The lust of the worm and the dog, of the whore and the pimp, of the straight and the queer, of the priest and the nun, of the canary and of the siren, of Calypso's carnival, copulation on the photocopier or in the matrimonial bed, is as divine as that of the cherubim when they stand facing God or when they retire to their not so chaste dormitories.

She is sliding back into the infernal Kingdom of God, gives off far too much talk about God, the exact propositions of which I do not care to understand or to remember. That's how she shoots her load. I recognise the tone and I know what she is on about. She needs to be punished.

Perhaps her desperate struggle against my tune has made her recidivist. She has prayed to my ageing opponent up there and asked him to chase out that diabolical tune. In any case, I am in no mood to take issue with her pious sentiments. They are like caoutchouc, too stretchable to joust against. Yet they can stifle life and need to be undermined whenever there is an opportunity lest they succeed in exercising secular power.

Or perhaps I have spent all my weapons. I've got nothing with which to escalate the contest. What else is there to do to strip naked her mind, what more taboos are there to break that would make a significant difference? I am working within self-imposed limits. I have nothing more to gain.

She is concerned about her image. I am doing her an injustice. "Don't think," she says unasked, "that I spend all my time in church. I don't. I am a normal person, enjoying normal pleasures. That's what I wanted you to see. You do not have to preach the gospel of the body to me." I think she wants me to like her.

Perhaps I have achieved enough. Unlike Christus Rex, I neither want total war nor total victory, just a sweet balance with a slight predominance of evil to keep life spicy and avoid devastating unemployment among policemen, judges, lawyers, screws, glaziers, locksmiths, insurance agents, probation officers, bereavement councillors, child-abuse investigators,

porn publishers, thriller writers, television film makers. How sad our lives would be if we could not contemplate evil on our television screens and if this evil were not life-like and credible!

### **HOLY HOLE**

I pass a remark in praise of her body, by which I mean 'the' body as a tool for sexual pleasure. She dismisses me: "You say that to all women."

"Not to all. To many. Not to the ugly ones. Not to the incomplete ones. At least they must have a hole (trou)."

I have to shock her with that word. It gives her the shudders.

"What's wrong with it?" I ask, "That's exactly what it is, isn't it. It's a hole, not a surface. Are you so afraid of a merely technical description? Do I have to say 'sacred portal' or 'pleasure grove'? Why is 'hole' a filthy word? Because I have used it without hesitation, as if it were a hole like any other? Would you prefer me to say 'ton sexe'?"

She nods, still shocked.

"So you see, I say it to many many, but only you are here, therefore I say it to you and I do it to you. Aren't you lucky? I can't feel up a woman who is absent. Would you prefer me to ignore you, not to touch you? I doubt it. Imagine what we would have missed during the last few days! You enjoyed yourself, didn't you. We both did, each for his own reasons. Men and women are like peaches and bananas. There are many beautiful ones, but you eat the one you have and get as much juice out of it as you can, let it run out of all of your holes."

"Bananas aren't juicy."

"But rub one against the cherry or stick it into a peach, and the juice will come out."

"Oh you villain!"

### **A DARE: IN THE RAW?**

I suggest we go naked into the water. She is very reluctant: "It will be light when we come out. People will see us."

"Why not? We are far away from the promenade. A few days ago, you stood naked on the steps and said: 'Je me fiche des gens, I don't give a fuck if anybody comes.' "



She is beginning to waver. My proposal is tempting. But there are a hundred and fifty metres to walk naked from our rocks across the open bay to reach the water.

"If people see me, they will laugh at Jacques."

"That's a different matter. In that case we have to be careful. I would never want Jacques to be exposed to ridicule."

I am a funny devil. Why don't I want old Jacques to be hurt, to be regarded as a cuckold? Perhaps because he is totally faultless in this. I have not seduced him. He is entirely my victim. Madame La Sirène only half.

I: "The promenade is far. People can see no details that distance."

"But there is a path over the cliffs right above us."

"It was there yesterday too and we have been here completely naked embracing each other for several days running. From above they can see your cheveux, not your poil."

"I'll go to the water with my costume on and then perhaps I will take it off."

I agree with the compromise. We leave swimwear and claquettes on a boulder twenty metres from the water's edge, and I send a jeer up to Saul.

## IN THE WATER

### SWIMMING IN THE RAW

"This is niiiiiiiiece," she beams after she has been swimming for a few minutes.

"Say Thank You to your devil for giving you courage."

"Thank you."

I swim off with a cackle.

She: "I think you are hiding something valuable inside you. You pretend to be bad but you aren't."

"Madame, how dare you insult me! I am pure evil, purified in the fires of hell. Only evil is left in me, that's why I have no conscience and I am the only person who is perfectly happy."

"I don't believe you."

"That's a dangerous form of disbelief, Serine. You must recognise the devil when you see him. Otherwise you cannot enjoy what his

body has to offer. Only the devil can offer pure joy, untainted by conscience and thoughts of a sentimental impotent God."

"God is not impotent."

"What do you bet? He hasn't struck me down yet. Not because he will not, but because he cannot. He does not even see or hear. He allowed the extermination of the Jews though, and they had done nothing wrong. He allowed the massacres in Rwanda and Kosovo. He allowed the slaughter of countless Arab freedom fighters in the Algerian War. He allowed the enslavement and genocide committed all over the world by the colonial powers. God is impotent. He has lost his marbles. I'll show you later where they are. He can't even masturbate, to say nothing of laying the 15 year-old Capitaine (sic!) of La Rochelle.

"It is colder without the swimsuit," she says.

"That was the idea. Come here so that we can warm each other."

We embrace tightly. I press my pubic bones against hers.

I: "Do you think we could knock some underwater sparks?"

I do not wait for an answer.

I: "Open your legs. Time for the elevation."

She does, I mime ringing the bell: 'ding ding'.

## **DRESS**

### **NAKED TO THE NICHE**

It is light now. Pink clouds in the sky. The thin sickle of the moon embedded in a pink aircraft condensation stripe. We pick up our costumes and walk naked back to the high rocks. She clutches the swimsuit in front of her. She is hiding her pubis. Ashamed now? Of what, when she was not ashamed in earlier years as she has proudly confessed? Is this spiritual progress? Still corrupted by the preaching of her church? Haven't I done enough to cure her?

To cure her properly I should have laid her, and nailed her, but I am too lazy, I would have to keep nailing her, her mouth is more trouble than her cunt is worth. I can't have one without the other. Her bloody God is welcome to her. I've done as much as a reasonable devil can be expected to do, my moral duty, I will do no more.

I am walking far behind her.

"Turn around," I shout, "I want to see you."

She turns, poses, stretches her arms in the air.

### SEX TOYS

She: "I like things which are natural, as God made them. Jean-Yves was disgusting. He used all sorts of sex machines."

I prick up my hairy ears: "Euge, euge! That's lovely. Why do you call them disgusting? Many people buy them, otherwise they could not be mass-produced. Are they all immoral perverts? If they gave Jean-Yves pleasure, they must have been good. The bible does not say you mustn't use vibrators. They can be very good for you, especially when you haven't got a man or he doesn't start you up or finish you off properly. Have you ever tried one?"

She doesn't answer but shakes her head in disgust.

I: "Why did you marry him if you did not like his sexual tastes?"

"He wasn't like this when we got married. He was quite normal then."

"Is this how your children were conceived, on the rack or with a pressure drill?" I sneer.

"He started his perversions only after the children were born."

I smell a rat, Madame.

"Why did you get married to him, because you both were as sex-mad as we all were in the seventies? Because you shared his tastes?"

"No, sex was only by the way. I wanted to go on holidays with him, my parents forbade it, so we got married so that we could do what we liked."

I: "Aiaiai, and then I was able to bless you with all those children, in those days when condoms and the pill were easily available, what, Madame? You must have loved children more than sex if you didn't use them. What a joy for your husband to be saddled with three screaming brats when all he wanted was an energetic cunt. But you turned your body into a breeding machine, one brat popping out every year. That's why he hated your children, I've been wondering about that all along, why he made so many if he hated them. So it was **you** who made those children, not him. Even in those days you were not quite as enterprising and wicked as you make out to be. Only lapsed occasionally rather than sinning with joy? Your poor husband had to turn to rubber dolls, who are more compliant, started beating the bishop, looked for other women and occasions to enjoy sex for its own sake? Oh dear oh dear! I thought your deplorable saintliness was only a recent aberration, but was it perhaps a life-long inclination, and your G-string on the beach only a superficial concession to me? Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into

the kingdom of hell (Matth. 7:21). Verily, I say unto you, you drove your poor husband into unnatural vices. Euge, euge. But you hated his toys because now he could do without you. Your hole was only a hole, no longer sacred, no longer to be worshipped, no longer unique, any other hole could take its place and even do better."

She does indeed need praying for. She does not know if she is a saint or a sinner. Neither as comfortable with her past as she should be, nor with her present.

Her fear of toys and fetishism must also be related to the church's ancient antagonism against masturbation and other unnatural, because non-productive and merely pleasurable, vices. Nudity is reprehensible because it arouses desire, she can accept it because it is "natural" and therefore divine. Fetishes and toys are unnatural and therefore diabolical. I must take more time over my next victim and convert her to the joys of fetishism, masturbation, group sex, pornography, if I really want to get her into my clutches. La Sirène, it seems, has been too easy and her sins are far too light. But \*\*\*\*\*mas is upon us and I must concentrate on sowing discord in families. I have no more time for her.

"Why did you say you married Jacques?" I want to hear it again.

"He loved my children."

"Unlike Jean-Yves! But they were teenagers then, would soon leave your house. Who cares whether he loved them, was ready to be a good father to them, or not! That's no good reason for marrying a man, a man so much older than you."

She does not reply.

I persist: "Or could it be that Jacques was not as keen on sex as a younger man. And that's what you wanted. You married a teddy bear. Not a sex toy, but a toy all the same."

### **NOT NAIVE**

She talks about two women who had to teach the catechism to children in church and gave them a very naive image of God. This was during the time of her search. She was very much upset by what she heard. She also noticed priests and churchgoers being more concerned with business, power and social affairs than with God himself. Her disappointment was so great that she turned to the monks. They were indeed leading a holy life, and observing their example finally converted her. That's why she is thinking of becoming a nun when she no longer has to care for Jacques.

She is not naive. She is a member of her church, but a critical member, she can keep her distance. She has made up her own mind

and is not simply repeating what the priests say. "Don't make me out to be an uncritical idiot," she seems to say.

### GOD'S BALLS



We are dressed and walk back among the large boulders. I pat one of them.

I: "Do you know what these are? These are les couilles de Bon Dieu (the balls of the good lord)."

Now she gets genuinely angry: "Don't mock my God!"

I shrink back. What to do now? Apologise, appease her and start again tomorrow, when she will be less shocked? Less shocked each time, each time less... That's the danger of keeping bad company, especially of keeping company with the devil in disguise -- who is who he says he is, but nobody believes him because people expect him to lie. There is only one remedy: to escape altogether, form one's own club or sect, huddle together with other grey church mice and mumble the rosary.

I decide to press forward. I shake with merriment: "But it is true, my sweetheart. I am convinced of it. These are balls all right, and they aren't mine. Mine are much smaller and I only got two. And you can't bounce mine together and let them spark, but with God's balls you can, and you should. He likes it."

She tries to suppress her grin, but it is pretty permanent and my laughter infects her. Her protest is weakened. Humour is stronger than sanctimoniousness. She thinks my suggestions are funny. But not religiously correct? Has her God no sense of humour, or are his followers too vain and arrogant to have one? Why shouldn't God have balls, considering he has all other human attributes, considering that he has a head, eyes, a face, a beard and Michelangelo even gave him a finger? So why no bit and no balls? If giving him balls is blasphemous, then giving him a face is equally blasphemous, as more intelligent prophets rightly say.

Sex is a dirty word in this church, in spite of the moderate liberal assurances of its priests. Therefore I shall grind their noses into their cunts and arses, slap it around their faces, make their churches echo with it, till they are even more sick of it than they already are.

"Yes," I say, "these are his balls. Aren't they nice and big and hard, I wished they were mine, just two or three of them, but even I cannot compete. Sad though, he has lost them all, that is

why he is so powerless these days. You know why Germany lost the war? Listen carefully, this is an English poem I learned from my father. You can sing it to the Colonel Bogey or the River Kwai March:

Hitler has only got one ball,  
Goering's got two but they're no use at all,  
Himmler has something simmler,  
But Goebbels has no balls at all.

That's why the fucking Germans lost the war, imagine!"

## FRIDAY, 22 DECEMBER

### UNDRESS

#### SALINA'S RETURN

Salina returned last night, a she-devil and a full-blooded woman if ever there was one, to see if I had made good use of my allotted time. I dutifully hand over my logbook, she is impressed, gives me the promised reward, and, boy! didn't I need it. There is nothing more divine than two thoroughbred devils of any sexual orientation who love each other to celebrate a job well done. Euge, euge!

There is no point in returning Serine to the merry world of nightclubs and sex off the peg. She would not find partners there, until I set up my projected chain of sex clubs for the over-sixties: X-MANIACS.

It is enough for me to have muddled the waters of her bland theology. God is the father of lies, but I am the sea of confusion.

I walk with Salina along the coast.

"I don't like her, she talks too much, she makes me fidgety," says Salina, "if only she could keep God to herself. For me she remains 'Madame' and she will never get my address. I want to have my peace in hell. What you do with her is your business and your pastime. I know your bad taste when it comes to women, especially when you don't have me around to entertain you. Of course, Ex abundantia cordis ..."

I: "Yes, I know, os loquitur, as our sainted grandmother, may she roast in hell, used to say. She is human, in all her folly! How hard it is to be old after such a life and with such a lusty constitution. She can no longer extol sex, so now she extols God, whom she can believe to be real, who gives her divine ecstasies, even though he is no more real than a JPEG image, not even as real as an oil painting. Let her have that pleasure after I have done with her. With me, she had the chance of casting one last nostalgic glance back over her happy youth and life. Worshipping

God or worshipping sex, it boils down to the same thing. Call it what you will," I say.

We arrive at Salina's hour, ten minutes late for La Sirène. It is necessary to resume Salina's routine, her hour, her respectability. My poor canary will be confused, embarrassed. She does not know that Salina comes straight from hell and has no shame. The poor canary will ask herself whether Salina knows how her respectable friend has sinned in her absence? What are the rules of engagement now? Most embarrassing, Salina knows La Sirène's husband! Will she talk?

Madame comes to meet us along our crooked path. She has been waiting. She kisses Salina according to custom, and they engage in conversation. No kiss, no touch for me. The old distance is restored. I am safe. We do not know each other.

Salina and Serine go into one niche to undress, I go into another. After a minute Serine returns and beckons me to join them in their niche. Wise move, I think. We can see each other naked when we get dressed, not when we undress. But if we undress separately, we will dress separately. Principiis obsta. Serine thinks ahead. Undressing is a modest affair, since we wear our swimsuits underneath our clothes when we arrive. The option of nudity arises when changing after the bath.

#### THE DRUNKARD'S BALLS

"You do not believe what you missed last night in the village," says the canary. "I don't know what's going on, I can't escape balls any more. Imagine what happened last night. We have a notorious drunk here, called Antoine. At 11 last night, he came tumbling out of the Bar Europe into the village square, dead drunk, singing raunchy songs at the top of his voice."

"Les Filles de La Rochelle?"

"No, we have more than one raunchy song in France. The square was full of revellers because someone had won the lottery and was giving free drinks to all and sundry. In the crowd was a miserable woman, 80 years old, locally known as The Gazette because of the speed with which she spreads local gossip. She started abusing Antoine, telling him what are vile good-for-nothing he was, whereupon he started chanting 'C'est la mère Michèle qui veut montrer sa chatte' (This is old Michèle who wants to show her pussy). The Gazette called him an impotent bastard who could not get his willie up even if he wanted to. He responded: 'Why should I, your pussy is as dry as the Sahara.' La Gazette, outraged, countered she wouldn't get moist for a eunuch like him who was only fit to sing soprano. 'Go to hell, you have no balls!' she screamed when he scornfully tried to embrace her.

'No balls,' he roared, 'what do you bet?', let down his trousers and his underpants and presented them to her. She spat, turned away in disgust, and the onlookers applauded.

What on earth is happening to this village? I feel an evil presence here."

## IN THE WATER

### HYMN TO VOLUPTÉ

Salina is in the sea well before me and Serine, and she does not stay in the water as long as we will. Long before we leave the water, we see Salina getting dressed and marching off to the warmth of the bakery and of her infernal hearth, clutching a baguette. What's in store for me! Is she getting greedy?

Serine and I, however, are alone as we used to be, unsupervised except by the good Lord who himself is not only love, as the church proclaims, but 'volupté' as I will learn today.

For as we swim up and down, Serine delivers a hymn to volupté so clear, determined and unambiguous that I am not sure whether she is talking to me off the cuff or whether she is reciting something she has written last night and memorised, and the very recital of which she has practised. No, I hear, she has never written that down, she is telling me of a novel experience she had last night. (The result of my jokes about God's bullocks?)

I translate 'volupté' with 'pleasure', the pleasure of being touched by a man, touching her whole body, touching her hair, her forehead, kissing her eyes, taking her face in his hands and looking at her with rapture, sliding his hands along her whole body, along each of her limbs, caressing her neck, kissing her navel, and never wanting to penetrate like ordinary men, not aiming straight for her hole (she quotes the word with disgust); and for a moment only half-understanding her, as always, I wonder, in my vanity, whether she is talking about her experience with me, which must have at last inspired her new mental sensations and formulations; but she continues that in this pleasure no foul language is used (so I have not yet abolished her fear of that and the dichotomy between foul and noble language, my foul-is-fair campaign has failed), and that God is this great lover, he has given us the capacity for pleasure, he is all volupté. ("A very convenient amalgam!" I think.)

"When I swim in the sea, and the water glides along my body, I feel that volupté. I am feeling it right now. Tomorrow," she cries excitedly, "we will swim 'tout nus' again, won't we, for the last time. For, after that, I shall depart for my Christmas retreat near the monastery, the one I told you about."

"Yes, we will, I will arrive ten minutes before Salina so that we can be alone together for the last time. Remember you owe that



wonderful experience to the devil. I have taught you about the volupté du bon Dieu, as you call it. It is manifested not only in the water that touches your body but also in his balls which you see all around you," (she no longer flinches), "and in every baguette you hold in your hand. You owe that experience to me, now do with it what you will."

"Thank you, Robert."

"Now let me offer you to your God of volupté. Legs apart!"

She opens her legs and as I touch her pubis, she jumps out of the waves like a Jack-out-of-the-box (a Hegelian tragedy: she jumps to the blasphemy in order to escape the sin of having me press her pussy too tightly), I ring the imaginary bell 'ding ding', and a new religion, a new rite has come into being. It works like clockwork. "Et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui," I mutter.

"Satan's mass," I say and she savours the joke. She still knows not who I am. I raise my finger: "Our last elevation: Do this in memory of me."

When all this is over, the only idea that will remain in her mind is that she undressed in front of a man and swam in the nude while allowing him to see her and to protect her. Nothing else happened.

## DRESS

### PERSISTENT INNOCENCE

We get dressed in all our customary freedom. We have remained too long in the sea. Only my fingers are stiff (would it were the other way round). I have difficulty in handling garments, closing buttons and zips, tying up shoe laces. There she is, still naked and muses: "If all your women were here, they would be laughing at you that you have me here all naked and do nothing to me. I think the more we see each other naked, the more our carnal desires disappear. That is why it is good to be natural."

"Bloody hell!" I think, "I don't want them to disappear, can't I win with this cow? If she is naked, she feels 'pure', if I muffle her up, she feels 'pure'. I must dress her with a thong and translate her to a Brazilian beach. My own country!"

I do not know how to respond. I do not know what motivates this train of thought. Is she happy or sad that I do nothing? Does she doubt I am really the devil? Shall I say that I have embraced her ideas rather than her? Never! Have I been beaten? Neither. I have created confusion, or I have revealed confusion. That is enough of a victory, for I hate a world of clarity and order: it is a cruel and intolerant world, the world of the Mormons, the world of the Hitlers and the Torquemadas, the world of the French torturers in Algeria, the world of certainties. Thank God, Madame

and her certainties now belong to a minority: therefore she is no danger, but if her party gained power -- in any religion, in any country? -- ! -- They have to be undermined while we have the chance.

A world of doubters is better than a world of believers, and enthusiasts are harmless only when they are full of new wine.

Before her God was, was I. I was the chaos. And the chaos was all good. And her God came, destroyed chaos, and created order out of chaos. He created the divide between good and evil, wet and dry, light and darkness, while I ruled over infinitely smaller gradations of better and worse, warmer and colder, lighter and darker. But never has he gained absolute power. His reign is an illusion and its gates shall not prevail. Mementote: From chaos we have come and to entropy shall we return: my reign yesterday, today, and for ever.

#### **SATURDAY, 23 DECEMBER**

Our last day has come. Naked we walk into the water.

"You too had your fun," she says, as if there had been any doubt about it, as if she needed to reassure herself.

"We both have had our fun."

We embrace each other tightly in the water, a last kiss. 'Ding, ding', the new rite.

"Will you come back?"

"Perhaps, who knows."

"Pray for me at midnight mass."

"All right, canary, I will."

She needs happiness. She has persuaded herself that she is overflowing with divine happiness. But it is not real. She is uneasy. Something is missing. What am I to pray for? Her salvation is certain. Prayer is the only way that remains of offering and receiving love, even if it is only words.

She gives me a Christmas card. Hand-made. Painted on light grey paper, with silver, black and golden ink. Stars made of velvety leaves from her garden have been glued to it. PAX, it says, and Joyeux Noël 2000. "Car Dieu fit descendre son Fils", says the next page. "Jésus ... l'amour au coeur du monde", the third. "Bonne Année 2001", she wishes me on the last. She must have spent days pouring her affection for a poor devil into that beautiful card.

If I were not HE who is and ever shall be, who has to do his moral duty, I could almost fall in love with her. But then, could one not fall in love with any woman who loves! Love makes them beautiful.

"Thank you for your beautiful Christmas card, I shall guard it in my heart," I say, for now is the time not for scorn but for affection, the last impression that must remain with her to her dying day, for unlike her all-powerful cruel God, I am a compassionate devil. I am the one who forgives all sins, I am the one who promises eternal happiness. Her sins are forgiven; for she loved much. (Luke 7:47)

"Au revoir, Madame La Sirène, au revoir La Petite".

"Au revoir, Robert le Diable, que Dieu te bénisse," and a little tear rolls down her cheek. "I'll be back after Epiphany."

#### AFTER CHRISTMAS

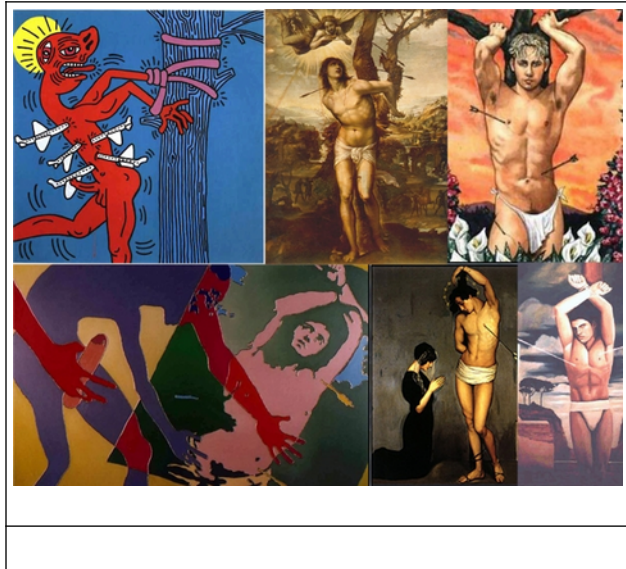
But verily by the counsel of God the kingdom of the devil increases. He guides not only the minds and provides the opportunities but also the excuses which we need to use them.

It so happened that during the days of Christmas my sister Salina's cottage was overflowing with guests; and she, having seen what havoc I had wrought with the mind and body of La Sirène, and that I could not be trusted to share a room with any of her straight-laced guests (not that \*\*\* I \*\*\* would have minded), and there being no room for me in the inn, "Brother," she said, "I had to give my room to my son and his wife, there is nowhere else for me to sleep, unless I come and share your bed. I am sure you will not misunderstand my intentions: this is an emergency; and since it seems that to you one body is like any other, and you were not embarrassed by La Sirène, who after all was a complete stranger, and we have by now all seen each other in the raw, I suppose you cannot be embarrassed by me."

Salina and I continued swimming during the twelve holy days. But when the wise men had passed, the galettes des rois had been eaten, and the 'Pour qui?' been called, La Sirène did not return to the bathing place as she had promised.

Salina and I knew neither her surname nor her address. Salina no longer bumped into her during her walks. Eighteen months later I received a religious picture postcard from the Benedictine convent of X in the Vosges: "Cher Monsieur, My husband died while we were on holiday. I am now a Sponsa Christi. It was wonderful meeting you. May God guide you and shower you with his blessings." The saint was St Sebastian.

**ORA PRO NOBIS PECCACACATORIBUS**

	<p>Clockwise from top left: Paintings by</p> <p>Keith Haring (1958–1990),</p> <p>Antonio Bazzi detto il Sodoma (1477–1549),</p> <p>Mark Satchwill (Adonis Art Collection, London),</p> <p>Frédéric Desclos, Angel Zárraga (1886–1946),</p> <p>Peter Colstee (1960–xxxx).</p>
---	--

---

**DOCUMENTATION AND NOTES  
FOR TRANSLATORS, EDITORS AND READERS**

More notes on allusions, quotations and French or Latin words and phrases can be provided on request.  
e: klaus.bung@rochdalewriters.org.uk

**PUN**

pêcheur = fisherman (Latin: piscator)  
pécheur = sinner (Latin: peccator)

**NICKNAMES USED FOR THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST**

- La Petite
- Madame Sirène
- Serine - Canary
- Lore Ley
- beata, Betschwester
- grenouille de bénitier  
(frog who lives in the holy water basin,  
holy-water frog)

**AUTHOR'S NOTES**

(NOT intended for print publication)

Principles

- When we grow older, not to lose the skill of flirting, making contact with strangers
- See how quickly, or how, the barriers fall, how the taboo "Noli me tangere" is broken. Curiosity.
- See what motives (excuses) people have / need to give themselves/deny themselves. Surprising reactions. E.g. all the talk about God and the value of chastity (être sage, ne faire pas de bêtises) is blown away.
- To create memories of experiences. To avoid regrets of missed opportunities.
- The person who takes the initiative is, to some extent, charitable by providing the other with, at least, memories of sins of thought.

### Theme

The goal is nothing. Getting there is everything. What is wonderful is to see the barriers (or fig leaves) fall, one by one, along the way.

Enter by the narrow gate, says the Lord, and if it is not too narrow, this will be nicer than entering by the wide gate. But knocking at the gate and not entering at all can be just as nice, and nowadays it is certainly safer.

The seducer is doing his victim a favour by giving her a chance to do what otherwise she would not dare do ...

Seduction &c: is it moral, is it deceitful? Rule: both parties must derive genuine pleasure / benefit from the event; but the pleasure need not be, and seldom is, identical in nature.

The difference between action and words:

I have confidence in you, I trust you.  
She feels his hands on her pussy and does not mind.

### PROPOSED AND REJECTED TITLES

A Daughter of Rochelle  
And lead us not  
Autumn romance  
Cogitatione  
Flirt with the Devil  
Get thee to a nunnery  
Holiday romance in autumn  
Liberation  
On s'amuse  
Peccavi nimis cogitatione  
Seduction  
Slings and arrows  
Temptation  
Temptation among the rocks  
The Ancient Submariners  
The arrows of St Sebastian  
The conversion  
The Devil's Diary  
The Siren Chants  
Virtual Talk  
Virtual Virtue

**SUBTITLES**

From the diary of a seducer  
From the Devil's Diary  
A study in seduction  
Making a siren sing  
Making a canary sing  
Strip Tease, or Virtual Virtue